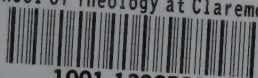


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SERMONS

THE BATTLE OF LIFE

THE TEN VIRGINS

THE PRODIGAL SON

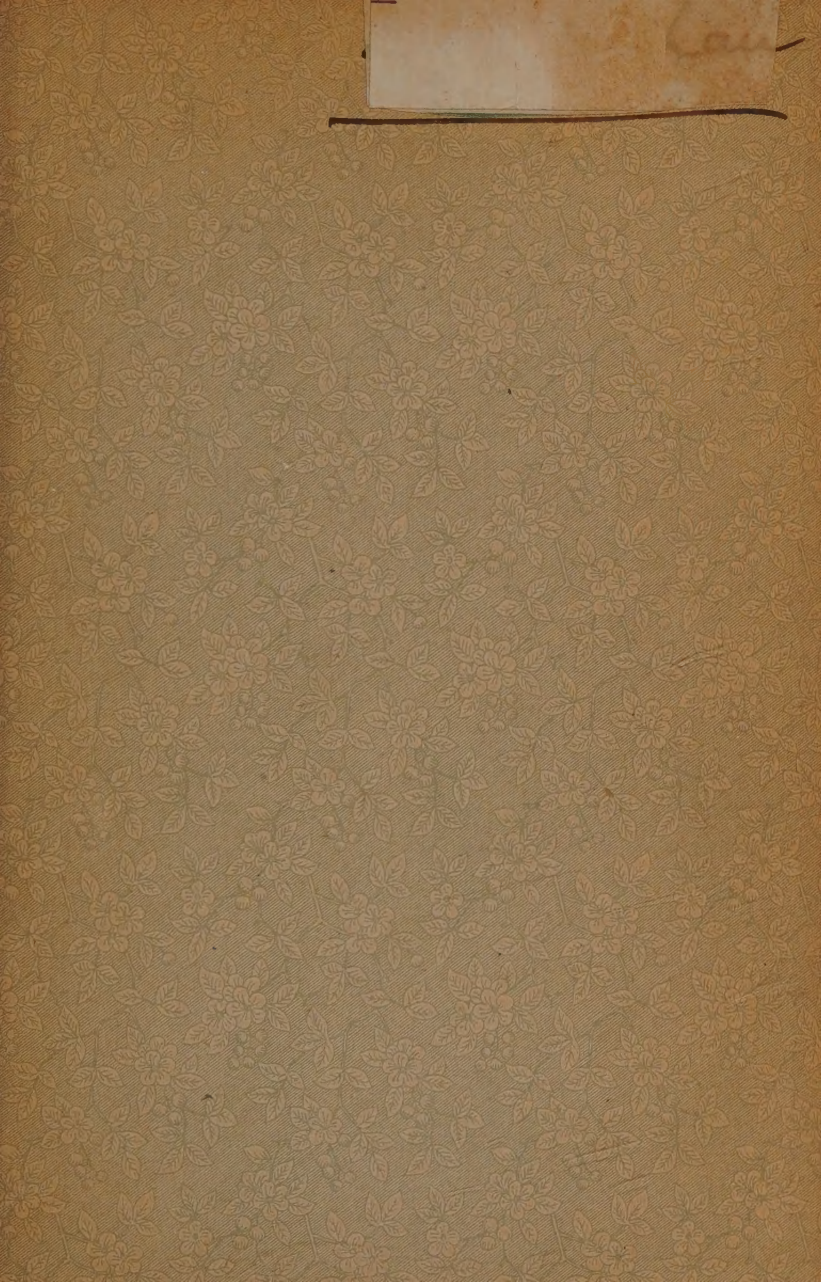
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THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

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The Battle of Life.

A SERIES OF MISSION SERMONS.

INCLUDING COURSES OF SERMONS ON
THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS &
THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

BY

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, M.A.,

VICAR OF S. GILES-IN-THE-WOOD, N. DEVON.

AUTHOR OF "PARABLE SERMONS TO CHILDREN." "THE CHILDREN'S BREAD."
"LED BY A LITTLE CHILD." "THE PILGRIM BAND." "SOLDIERS OF CHRIST."
"MISSION SERMONS." "SUNDAY SERMONETTES FOR A YEAR." "SERMONS FOR
A YEAR ON THE EPISTLES OR GOSPELS." "MISSION SERMONS FOR A YEAR."
"THE LIFE WORTH LIVING." "NEW AND CONTRITE HEARTS," ETC.

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The Battle of Life.

SERMON I.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

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“There is no discharge in that war.”

THE question is often asked in these days—“Is life worth living?” Many answer the question by saying that life is so hard, so sad, so wearisome and disappointing, that it is *not* worth living, and even declare that we are justified in taking away our life with our own hand. Now I deny all this emphatically. I deny that life is all hardness, and weariness, and sorrow, and disappointment. If there are many clouds, there is also plenty of sunshine. If the highway of life be steep at times, there are pleasant resting-places now and again. If there is a time to weep, there is a time to laugh also, and because we must expect to

shed tears sometimes, we need not go through life with a handkerchief always to our eyes. Trust me, my brethren, those miserable folks who are always abusing life, and telling us that it is not worth living, are looking upon it in a wrong way. If you look at a fair, sunshiny landscape through black spectacles, all will seem dark and gloomy. If you gaze at life through the wrong end of the telescope, all in it will look small and dwarfed, and its joys and blessings will seem a very long way off. So much depends upon the way in which we look at things. A child bred up in a stifling city alley, sees a field of daisies, and thinks it Paradise. Another, born to purple and fine linen, and accustomed to a hot-house, tramples on the field flowers, and calls them weeds.

The healthy, active man climbs up the heights of the mountains, and delights in the glorious prospect. The idler crawls along the lower slopes, and says it is very fatiguing. One man takes up a book full of beautiful thoughts and graceful fancies, and reads on, spell-bound. Another takes up the same book, and throws it aside, saying there is nothing in it.

Ah, that is what some people say of life, there

is nothing in it, nothing worth living for, whereas they have no eyes to see what life really is, and never really *lived* in the true sense. When life is first given to us, it is something like a sheet of paper put before a young beginner, who is told to draw a picture on it. Some set to work, and do their best. They draw a picture; some draw a very good picture, some a fairly good one, but they do their best. Others say to themselves—"We can never do anything with this," so they do not try, and make only a smudge instead of a picture.

So it is with life. Some people do their best, and their life is very good, very beautiful; other lives are nothing very remarkable, but still as good as circumstances permit. Some live a good, useful life, others spoil their life for want of trying, and make a blot instead of a picture. These last are the people who are always asking, "Is life worth living?"

Life is very often a failure, but it is the fault of those who have wasted it, who have, from the first, looked at it from a wrong point of view. It is no wonder that such people in their dying hour gaze back mournfully into the past, and find all barren. I look at the death-bed of

Churchill, the poet ; I see him dying miserably in a foreign land, and saying with his last breath, "*What a fool I have been !*" I read of Bolinbroke writing to Dean Swift, when they were advancing in years, and asking how they should play the last act of the farce called life. So, too, the dying wit, Rabelais, laughed at his last moment, and said, "Draw the curtain, the farce is played out."

To such men life is a mere period of careless mirth, and thoughtless indifference. To many, life is a weariness, and a vexation of spirit. Talleyrand, the great minister, died full of years, and they found these lines, written just before his death—

"Behold, eighty-three years have passed away ! What cares, what agitation, what anxieties, what ill-will ! And all without any results except great fatigue of mind and body, and a profound feeling of discouragement with regard to the future, and disgust with regard to the past."

Byron, the gifted poet, told his doctor in his last illness that he had grown heartily sick of life, and should welcome the hour of departure. "I have exhausted all the nectar contained in the cup of life," said he, "it is time to throw the dregs away." So died the statesman and the

poet, but not in faith. They had lived for this world, for self, and self-pleasing—no wonder that they found life a failure.

How ought we to look upon life, my brothers? First, as Christian men, we ought to look upon it from a Christian point of view. Then we shall see that life is the gift of God; a solemn and precious thing given to us in trust. We are merely *trustees*, who must one day give an account for the manner in which we have lived. We shall see also that life is doubly valuable, as having been redeemed at the price of Christ's most precious Blood.

Our life, then, is not our own to do what we like with; to be wasted and frittered away in selfish idleness, or in selfish work. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." We are Christ's servants, and in all we do we must put His Will and Commandments first, and strive to do nothing contrary to the teachings of His Gospel. We must not imagine that our religion as Christians is only concerned with certain seasons, such as prayer time, and Church time. It must go through our whole life; it must leaven the whole lump; it must be the compass by which we steer our course—the light that shines upon our way.

Too many people try to put off all serious thoughts about their soul till the hour of death and the great eternity are at hand. It is a common question often asked—"How did such an one die?" Wisely said a good man once—"Talk not to me of dying, what I have to do is to *live*, and to do the work which God has given me with all my might. When my work is over, God will call me home, it matters not when."

"What should a man desire to leave?
A flawless work, a noble life,
Some music harmonised from strife,
Some finished thing, ere the slack hands at eve
Drop, should be his to leave.
Or, in life's homeliest, meanest spot,
With temperate step from year to year
To move within his little sphere,
Leaving a pure name to be known, or not,
This is a true man's lot."

Looking at life, then, from the Christian point of view, we see that it is a sacred trust committed to us, that it is a life of duty which we owe to God. We are all meant to be servants in God's household, labourers in His vineyard, entrusted with talents to be used in His service. There is no excuse for the idler who wastes his life in

selfish amusement, or the greedy money-maker who lives only to get wealth. Every Christian should feel—"I *must* work the works of Him that sent me." In this life we are like travellers who only pass by a certain road *once*. Whatever good we can do, we must do now, for we shall not come this way again.

Again, we should look upon life as a *field of work*. All God's universe is a great factory of work where something is ever being done. Every one of us is like a wheel in the great machine, with a certain work to do, and woe unto us if we are idle when we ought to be doing, for we are not only neglecting our own duty, but we are throwing others out of gear. Remember, too, that *all* our work must be done unto the Lord, we are His servants wherever we are, and our place of business, our field, our shop, our home, should be as sacred as a Church, and consecrated to the service of God.

The last music composed by Mozart was his famous Requiem. He had been employed upon it for some weeks, and he felt that it was the work of a dying man. At last he said to his daughter—"My task is done, the Requiem—*my* Requiem is finished!" He gave the last notes

to his child, and bade her play them over. As the sound of the matchless music rose and fell, Mozart died, with a smile upon his lips. Happy are they who go to rest with the knowledge that they have finished their life's work, and finished it well.

My brothers, you and I are alike workers. Every man worthy the name is a worker, but are we workers together with *God*?

Again, we should look upon life as a *field of battle*. Year by year the fight waxes hotter. New men come rushing into the field, all is struggle, conflict. With millions it is a battle for bread, a fight for the necessities of existence, a struggle to keep body and soul together. With many it is a battle for fame. In the world of politics, of art, or science, or literature, men labour and rise early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, and fight their way through opposing obstacles, that they may win a name and a place of honour among their fellows. To every one life is a battle, but not of the same kind, or with the same object. It may be a mere selfish struggle to get to the front, to grow rich, to climb up over the heads of fallen enemies.

To the Christian life is a holy war, a sacred

battle, and "there is no discharge in that war!" We must be Christ's soldiers unto our life's end. There is no retirement, no signing of truces, for the Christian warrior. As the crusader of old fought for the Holy Sepulchre, so must we fight the good fight of the faith, for the glory of our God, for the honour of our Saviour, for the welfare of His Church.

We have vowed a vow unto the Lord, and we cannot go back. In the mere selfish battle of life, men struggle to win a good place, to push themselves into the front rank, and care not who falls beneath their feet. It is not so with the Christian; the worldling fights for worldly honour, wealth, success; the Christian fights that he may overcome evil with good. His object is to glorify God, and help forward the salvation of all men. He fights that he may conquer the evil in the world, and in himself. His life is a daily battle with "all that is not holy, all that is not true." He fights that he may make the road clearer and easier for those who come after him; he fights that he may crush the enemies of light and truth, that he may sweep ignorance and superstition before him, that he may leave the world and his fellow-men better than he found them.

In this great battle, this good fight of the faith, each Christian has his place and his work, from the least to the greatest. Brave Apostles and Martyrs, like S. Paul, could truly say at the last, "I have fought a good fight." Men who fought for the freedom and honour of England, who built her Church, who improved her laws, who cleansed her prisons, who erected schools for her children, and hospitals for her sick—these, too, have fought a good fight.

Yes, and the simplest labourer in a country village, who has the courage to be sober and steady in the midst of temptations to drunkenness and rioting, who makes up his mind to resist the evil, and says, "I will *not* spend my money in excessive drinking whilst my children go ragged and shoeless, and my wife is half-starved. I will *not*, by God's help, bring up my family to be drunkards by my bad example—such an one is fighting the good fight in the great battle of life.

They are not the only heroes who wear the Victoria Cross, and whom the world delights to honour. Some of the truest and greatest are quite unknown to fame, but their names are written in God's muster-roll—in the Lamb's Book of Life. You will find them in cottage

rooms and in palace chambers, among the sick and suffering, the poor and the afflicted—heroes who have learnt to bear their cross with patience, to crush the rebellious thought, to stifle the discontented word, and to say, “Thy Will be done.”

That man is God’s hero who goes on doing his work manfully, his duty to God and his neighbour, day after day, through sunshine and cloud, whether his heart be gay or aching; who can thank God for such things as he has; who can bear his troubles patiently when they come, and feel that it is all for the best; who tries to purify himself even as Christ is pure, to love his neighbour, to keep himself unspotted from the world.

“Who quells a nation’s wayward will
May lord it on a throne;
But he’s a mightier monarch still
Who vanquishes his own.
No frown of fortune lays him low,
No treacherous smile allures;
King of himself, through weal or woe—
He conquers who endures.”

SERMON II.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

HEBREWS IV. II.

“Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest.”

SINCE this life is for all a battle, we must not murmur if we are called upon to endure hardness. What should we say of the soldier who wished to desert the army because he had to bear hardships and fight a battle? Or what should we say of the boy who desired to leave school because he could not have his own way, and had to submit to discipline?

Well, it has pleased God to send us into this world as into a great school, where we may be fitted by lessons, by tasks, by punishment, to take our fit place in God's eternal kingdom hereafter. It has pleased Him to send us here as into a great battle-field, where we are to fight our battle, and gain our victory, and receive the crown laid up for those who conquer.

Remembering, then, that this life is a battle and a school-time, shall we murmur because we find the way sometimes rough and difficult, and because we are weary with the march of life? Work must come before true rest—"let us *labour*, therefore, to enter into that rest."

The discipline of school-time comes first, then the rest and joy of home. The stern, grim battle must first be fought out, then come victory and peace. No one ever wins earthly success by leading a life of idle ease, and sleeping away his days on a comfortable bed. No one ever gains a place in the Kingdom of Heaven without hard work, hard praying, hard struggle, hard fighting.

Let us think of some of the weapons and the armour which we need in fighting the battle of life. First of all, we need the whole armour of God—the shield of Faith, the helmet of Salvation, the sword of the Spirit. But of these I will not speak now. In addition to this equipment, every true man should have the weapon of *work*. Idleness is one of the most fruitful causes of discontent and sin of every kind. The people who tell us that life is not worth living, the battle not worth fighting, are mere idlers, who never did a day's work in God's vineyard—cowards, who never

struck a blow for the honour of Jesus. The man who has work to do, and does it honestly with his might, will never tell you that life is not worth living. It is better, a thousand times better, to be the ploughman who plods through the furrow, or the miner who quarries in the rock, than the fashionable idler, who drinks, and smokes, and gambles his useless life away ; it is better to be the hardest-worked woman, who cares for her family, who slaves to keep her children clean and decent, who goes to bed tired out every night, than to be the frivolous girl to whom life is nothing but society, a novel, and a box of sweetmeats. We say, thank God for *rest*—let us learn also to say, thank God for *work*.

But remember, my brothers, our work must not be merely selfish work. We must consecrate all we do to the service of God ; we must stamp the sign of the Cross on all that our hand finds to do ; we must have the spirit of the Nazareth workshop pervading all our tasks ; we must touch nothing which a Christian man, a godly man, ought not to undertake. We must let our religion rule our work, not let our work rule our religion.

But you may say to me, “ What do you mean by working for God ? I am not a Priest, or a Sister

of Mercy, or a District Visitor—I am an artizan, or a labourer, a tradesman, a domestic servant ; that is my work.”

Brethren, the work of the Priest or the Sister of Mercy is a work for God, but only one part of the work. You can do God’s work as a labourer, a trader, an artizan, or what not, by doing your work conscientiously, by doing your duty to God and your neighbour. If we are strictly honest, truthful, just, upright, faithful in our work, no matter how humble it is, we are doing it for God.

The true man puts his religion into his work every day of the week ; the half-hearted man keeps his religion, such as it is, for Sunday. The true man works with his might, prays with his might, helps his neighbour with his might, and is a happy man, in spite of the worries, the trials, the sorrows of the world. The true man works for God by setting a good example to his fellow-men. Whilst the drunkard, the swearer, the unclean, are recruiting for the devil in every parish, the man who is sober and chaste, who lets no corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, who comes regularly to God’s House, who kneels at the Holy Altar, who brings up his family in the way of God’s Commandments, such an one is a worker for God.

Would that we had more such men amongst us !

We want those who work for God *at home*. It is in the home circle that so much harm is done, because people forget God in their work and in their talk. What good will the lessons of the Church and the Sunday School do to your children if the home school be bad ? What avails it to teach the little ones the Ten Commandments if they daily see them broken at home ? What avails it to tell the children to keep themselves pure, and to rule their tongues, when every day their ears are poisoned by oaths and foul talk ? A bad home will undo the influence of the best of teachers, the most earnest of sermons.

Look at the drunkards, whose name is legion—what made them what they are ? In most cases, the example of a drunken father. Look at the shameless woman, who has lost her character, and glories in her shame—what brought her to this ? In most cases, she is but following in the evil steps of a bad mother or sister.

My brethren, for the sake of your children's souls, strive to make home life pure, godly, peaceable ; work for God by showing a good example in the home circle. We hear much in these times about the hard life of the working

man ; he complains that the battle of life is so severe that he is miserable at home, that he has no domestic peace or comfort. Well, there are no doubt some things which need improving in the lot of our labouring classes, but in many cases the fault is in the people themselves.

Let a man value his home, and try to make it happy, and he will soon succeed. Let a man spend his money on honest food and clothing for his wife and family instead of in the tavern, and he will soon see a change for the better. Let a man respect his wife, and not look upon her only as a mere machine to cook his food and keep his house. Above all, let a man have *God* in his home, and all will be well.

When I find people always complaining about the hardness of the times, and the severity of the struggle for life, I know that they are not praying people, not religious people. I know that they never kneel to ask God's help or guidance night or morning ; they go on from month to month and never enter God's Church, they never open a Bible. How can such people expect to find life anything but hard, and sad, and disappointing ? Life without God *must* be miserable. Have God in your house, have prayer in your house, and

you will soon have those good things which come from God in answer to prayer—peace, contentment, patience, faith, hope, charity.

“Away with gloomy doubts and faithless fear!
No arm so weak but may do service here:
By feeblest agents can our God fulfil
His righteous will.”

Again, in the battle of life we must have the armour of *Patience*. Nothing is more valuable in a soldier than the power of patient endurance. Anyone almost would be brave enough for the headlong rush of an exciting charge. But it needs a really brave man to face danger, anxiety, want, privation, hour after hour with *patience*.

Well, the battle of life is a waiting battle—the race set before us is a waiting race, to be run with patience. For the majority of mankind the work allotted is very much like that of a horse in a mill—the same monotonous round every day, and those are the best and the happiest who do that work patiently, faithfully, thoroughly, content to be where God puts them, and to do the work which He has given them.

We need this armour of patience, too, in dealing with our fellow-men. Who does not know what it is to be vexed by the dulness, and the slowness,

or the ill-temper of someone with whom we are forced to come in contact? In such cases, if we would do our duty, if we would fight the battle of life rightly, we have to be patient, we must bear and forbear.

The great scholar and schoolmaster, Dr. Arnold, once lost all patience with a dull pupil. The boy looked up in his face, and said, "Why do you speak so angrily, sir? Indeed, I am doing the best I can." Years after, Arnold used to tell that story to his children, and say, "I never felt so ashamed of myself in my life. That look and that speech I have never forgotten."

Once more, we need the weapon of *Hope*, to aid us in the battle of life. Without hope we can do nothing; a *hopeless case* is past all cure. A man cannot run rightly in a race, or fight manfully in a battle in which there is no hope of winning. The Christian runs the race, and fights the good fight, cheered by the hope which is set before him. He looks forward; he knows that, however dark the night of sorrow may be, joy cometh in the morning, the morning without clouds. If he is forced to weep, he knows that one day God shall wipe all tears from all faces; if he is weary and heavy-laden, he knows that there remaineth

a rest for the people of God, and that Jesus is a sure refuge and a place to hide him in. If he seems to find no fruit of his labour and his patience here, he holds fast to the promise that we shall reap if we faint not, and he looks forward to the words of the Master—"Well done!"

When Kepler, the great astronomer, had discovered the laws which govern the planets, he was despised and scorned by the ignorant and the jealous around him. Reduced to misery and want, he lay upon his death-bed, and a friend asked him if he did not suffer keenly in dying thus, without seeing his discoveries appreciated. "My friend," was Kepler's answer, "God waited five thousand years for one of His creatures to discover the laws which He has given to the stars, and cannot I wait also till justice is done me?"

Let us, my brothers, run our race, and fight our battle patiently, hopefully, though we may seem to fail. No one really fails in God's eyes who does his best.

It is the hope of glory, the hope of Heaven, which makes us strong to bear the burden and heat of the day, the heartache and the pain, which must come to us in the battle of life.

There is a certain sun-dial, which is inscribed with the hopeful line—" 'Tis always morning somewhere in the world." Brethren, when the night seems very black, and a horror of great darkness falls upon us, let the hope of Heaven come to cheer us, the hope of that home where it is always morning, for "there is no night there."

SERMON III.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

GALATIANS VI. 2.

“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

“LET us live whilst we are alive,” says the old classic motto. The Christian's motto is better still—“Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.”

To every true man “life is real, life is earnest.” It is a struggle, a contest, where many hard blows are struck, and there are many falls; but there is a place in it for every brave man to occupy, and a victory for every brave man to win. True men do not spend their time in *thinking* about life, but in *living* it; they do not sit at home and sketch out a picture of the battle of life, they go out into the highways and by-ways of the world, and fight the battle as well as they can.

Two of the greatest enemies to our spiritual life are *selfishness* and *discontent*. They hinder us more than any other from showing ourselves Christian men and fighting a battle for the Lord. I speak of selfishness and discontent together, because they are most closely connected. A selfish man is nearly always discontented. Half the miseries of life are caused by selfish people, who are thinking and talking about themselves instead of taking their place, and helping their fellow-men, in the great struggle of life.

These men, like Narcissus in the old fable, have looked at themselves so constantly that they have fallen in love with what they see, and care for nothing else.

My brethren, if we would fight the battle aright, and win the crown laid up for those who endure unto the end, we must think of others. We must bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. To have a burden to bear is a law of necessity, to assist each other in carrying it is the law of Christ. We must learn to look not only on our own things, but on the things of others. Instead of always bewailing our own troubles and sorrows, let us remember that our neighbours have their troubles also, and in

helping them we shall go far to forget our own.

I have heard that there is a certain narrow passage in London, over the gateway of which is written, "No burdens allowed to pass through." And yet every passenger who walks through that court carries his burden with him, none the less heavy because it is upon his heart and not upon his back.

Napoleon the First was walking one day with a lady, when a poor peasant appeared in the path heavily laden with sticks. The lady was about to push the old man impatiently on one side, but Napoleon laid his hand upon her arm and said, "Respect the burden, madam."

Everyone we meet has a load to carry of some sort or another—let us try to help him as well as we can, let us be patient with him, gentle with him, let us *respect the burden*.

Here, then, is our golden rule for living the true life of a Christian and fighting manfully in the battle. Think as little as possible of self, and as much as possible of others. Those people are ever the happiest who are most employed in helping their fellow-men.

A writer in the newspapers lately told us how whilst working in a leper hospital abroad, he

became acquainted with a young man eaten up with the horrible disease of leprosy. He was a sight piteous to behold, an object of horror even to himself, with no hope of release except by death. Such an one might have some excuse for asking, "Is life worth living?" Instead, however, of bemoaning his troubles, the young leper started a school for his fellow sufferers from that awful disease; and day after day this little band of martyrs, with all life's brightest hopes for ever quenched, and with a hideous death staring them in the face, helped each other, and worked, and prayed, and waited till the Lord should come to them in the hour of death and say, "I will, be ye clean."

Brethren, if you are tempted to murmur at your lot, to think your life so hard, your burden so heavy, go forth and help your neighbours; you will find there are hundreds whose lot is far harder than yours. Go and do a day's work among Christ's suffering people, learn to forget yourselves, and "learn the luxury of doing good." The next golden rule for living a happy and a true life is—be content with such things as you have. In order to find contentment you must have found God. If God be with

you, and you know it, nothing can come amiss.

David, speaking of the good things which God had done unto him, says, "My cup runneth over." And yet David's life was full of hardship and trouble. From the early days when he kept the sheep in Bethlehem, and fought with the lion and the bear, he was surrounded by enemies and dangers. He carried his life in his hand when pursued by Saul, he was forced to herd with outcasts in caves and holes of the earth, his position of king was full of difficulties, he had the bitterest of all trials—a bad son; and yet, with all this, David could say, "My cup runneth over." Why was this? Because David put his trust in the Lord his God, and so he was not afraid of what man could do unto him.

Look again at S. Paul. From the day when he was struck to the earth, and heard the words of Jesus which were to change his whole life, that life was one of danger and hardship. Before his conversion he might have lived, and probably did live, as a prosperous man, respected and admired as a learned Rabbi, and a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Henceforth he was to know persecution, hunger, thirst, shipwreck, prison, the stocks, in addition to the care of all the Churches. Yet

S. Paul could thank God and take courage, could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Why? Because God was with him.

We shall never be happy till we are contented, and we shall never be contented till we feel that we are God's and He is ours, and that His hand in all things, from the smallest to the greatest, rules and directs the affairs of our lives. The contented man is better than one who has a gold mine; that may fail, but this jewel of great price—a contented spirit, a spirit resting on God, will never wear out. On the other hand, a discontented man can never be happy, nothing is right with him. He always wants to be somewhere else, or under different circumstances from where he is. As you may pour water for ever into the ocean yet it never seems fuller, so you may give to the discontented man, and he is none the more satisfied. The discontent is in his heart, and it turns everything to the bitterness of gall. The poorest man, who can feel with truth that he has cast all his care upon the Lord Who careth for him, is after all the richest, for he has all that he needs. If Christ reigns in our hearts by faith, we have all we need

to make life happy, nothing can really come amiss to us. Without Christ, to live is discontent and misery, to die is despair.

Again, in the battle of life, we must look on the *right side* of things. A clergyman once went to visit a lady who was full of complaints and troubles. Nothing seemed right with her, everything was against her, life was not worth living. Meanwhile she had dropped the wool work on which she was engaged, and it lay in a heap before her. The clergyman, pointing to the confused mixture of different coloured wools, asked the lady why she wasted her time in doing such useless work. Her indignant answer was—"There is a beautiful pattern worked on the other side, you are looking at it the wrong way!" "And you," he said, "are looking at life in the wrong way, too!"

My brethren, so much depends upon looking at things from the right point of view. You may stand and gaze on a picture from one place in a room and see nothing but a confused mass of paint and varnish, but when you change your point of view, and get the picture in the proper light, you see a thing of beauty and of order.

So it is with life. If we look at it from a wrong

point of view, from the unbeliever's standpoint, or the prayerless man's corner, or the discontented one's platform, life appears a failure, a mistake, a misery, a hopeless case. But life viewed from the Christian's point of view, looked at faithfully, prayerfully, trustingly, though it may seem hard to understand at times, will yet appear as a beautiful picture—a perfect pattern made by the finger of an All-wise God.

Not only must we be careful to look at things on the right side, but to handle them properly.

There is a good homely proverb—*Take everything by the smooth handle*. Troubles, worries meet us in the battle of life like swords or knives. If you seize the knife by the keen blade you wound yourself, if you take it by the smooth handle all is well. So should it be with our vexations and troubles. They cannot hurt us much if we meet them bravely, wisely, patiently. Every keen sorrow has a smooth handle, if we would only look for it.

Still, the fact remains that the battle of life is very hard for most, and that those who strive to live godly lives are by no means preserved from the struggle. "The righteous perish, and no man taketh it to heart." Prayerful, self-sacrificing, unselfish men fall in the battle, struck down by

disease, or poverty, or neglect. What then? These are the true conquerors.

“Speak, History! Who are life’s victors? Unroll thy long annals and say—

Are they those whom the world calls the victors, who won the success of the day?

The martyrs, or Nero? The Spartans who fell at Thermopylæ’s tryst

Or the Persians and Xerxes? His Judges or Socrates? Pilate or Christ?”

When a great victory had been gained by the Spartan soldiers, those who stayed at home went to the Temples, clad in festal robes and wreaths, and thanked the gods for those brave men who had fallen in the fight doing their duty; then they went to their homes to mourn for those who had returned from the battle safe, but disgraced.

Brethren, when a man falls in the battle of life doing his duty, fighting the good fight, men may mourn for him, but there is joy before the angels of Heaven.

SERMON IV.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE,

S. JOHN II. 5.

“Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.”

OBEDIENCE is the chief mark of a good soldier, whether he be a soldier of Christ, or of the world's army. If your child really loves you, and trusts you, and believes in you, it obeys your wishes and commands. Even if your wishes are against his own, if the way which you choose for him is not *his* way, the really loving child obeys. He knows how to give up his own wishes in obedience to those of others. So it is with the Christian. It is useless for a man to talk loudly about his faith in Jesus, about his trust in the merits of his Saviour, his reliance on His precious Blood, unless he shows his faith by his *obedience*. To talk about our faith, and our love for Christ, is mere lip-religion—worthless.

I saw a wretched woman lately in the streets,

her face marked with the signs of drunkenness, and many another vice, who was singing, in the hoarse voice of the drunkard—

“I do believe that Jesus died for me,”

but she never paused to remember that Jesus did not die that she might remain a drunkard and an outcast. He died to redeem us from the prison-house of sin and death, that we might lead holy lives, and glorify God in our daily work. He died that we might be set free to walk, not in the old evil ways of sin, but in the way of His commandments.

Oh, brethren, when you talk about your faith in Jesus, look at your lives, and see if your faith is shown by your obedience; if not, you are deceiving yourselves, and the truth is not in you. Hear what the Master saith, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments. . . . Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the Will of My Father which is in Heaven. If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments.”

Absolute obedience is necessary for the Christian in fighting the good fight of the faith, as for the soldier on the field of earthly warfare. It is said

that a certain leader in old days came with five hundred men against a king with an army of twenty thousand. The king sent a messenger, telling him that it was madness for him to attempt to oppose his few troops to the king's great army. The leader called one of his soldiers to the front, and bade him draw a sword and drive it into his heart. The man obeyed instantly, and fell dead. Then the leader said to another soldier, "Leap into yonder chasm!" and the order was obeyed. Turning to the messenger, the general added, "Go, tell your king I have five hundred men like these, who always obey orders."

In the present day there is a great lack of ready, prompt obedience. The old Commandment bidding children to honour their father and mother, to obey their parents, is often practically a dead letter. Young men and women become a law unto themselves, and insist upon having their own way. Servants frequently resent being called by that name, and kick at the word *obedience*. If a clergyman finds it necessary to reprove a parishioner for evil doing, he often makes him his enemy for life. All these things are signs of the times, and show how very far we have drifted from the plain teachings of the Gospel. Instead of being

humble, teachable, obedient, we find people proud, impatient of reproof, unwilling to be controlled.

Too much of our religion nowadays is unreal ; it is like an extinct volcano—a mere hollow shell, out of which all the fire has burned away. There are people who accept the Gospel as true, who declare their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet never try to obey the commands of the Gospel, or to follow in the steps of Christ's most holy life. You see these people, week after week, coming to Church, taking part in the Service, listening critically to the words of the Gospel or Epistle, or lessons ; arguing, perhaps, about the sermon, and yet their lives are not in the least degree influenced or changed, or leavened by what they have heard. Such people will listen with interest to the story of the Crucifixion ; they are touched by the account of Jesus bearing His Cross, or bowed down in the Agony of the Garden ; but it never occurs to them to take up their own cross and follow Jesus. The commandment of the Lord is plain—"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." This commandment is given to you, to everyone who is called a Christian ; have you tried to obey it ? Have you ever denied yourselves

anything—given up any comfort, or pleasure, or money, or time, or wish, for Christ's sake—from a sense of duty? You read of our Master fasting in the wilderness; did it ever occur to you to give up a meal, or a luxury, that you might be more like Him Who for our sakes fasted forty days and forty nights?

It will not do for you to read the Gospel as a piece of ancient history, very interesting, but not concerned with your lives to-day. It will not do to regard the religion of Christ as a series of beautiful pictures which you may admire, but cannot imitate. The Gospel is for all time; the pattern laid down there is for all God's people always; its commandments are for us to-day as much as for the Apostles of old; it will not do for us to admire, we must *obey*. When you read of our Lord's sufferings on the Cross, do you think to yourselves, "Yes, He bore all this for me, and I have faith in Him, so all is well?" Not so; you have forgotten your own cross. Are you content that Jesus should suffer, and that you should be at ease; that He should hunger, but that you should be fed; that He should be poor, and you living in comfort; that He should be crowned with thorns, and you with roses? Very

different was the spirit of the old crusader, who, when offered the throne of Jerusalem, refused to wear a crown of gold when his Master wore one of thorns.

When you read the wondrous story of the Good Samaritan, and admire its teaching, does it ever strike you that that parable was spoken as much for you as for its first hearers? That command, "Go and do thou likewise," is given to every one of us. You admire the Samaritan; did you ever try to imitate him? When you saw a neighbour—someone, perhaps, whom you did not like much—crippled by misfortune, wounded in the battle of life, in sore need of a helping hand, a little money, a little sympathy, a little interest, did you remember the Good Samaritan, and the divine command, or did you leave the wounded one in his trouble, and go by on the other side?

When you read of S. Paul fighting the good fight of the faith, and going on fearlessly to the end, the martyr, the witness of Jesus, do you merely admire the Apostle as a splendid specimen of a brave enthusiast who lived and died a long time ago? Do you never think that S. Paul was a man of like passions with you, tempted as you are; that the same battle that he fought you must

fight—the battle against self, against sin, against the world, the devil? Do you never think that you are bound to be a witness for *your* Master, Jesus, just as much as S. Paul was for *his* Master, Jesus; that as he was fearless in speaking for the honour of his Lord before kings and rulers, so you ought never to be afraid to show Whose you are, and Whom you serve?

Brethren, the Gospel is worthless if it be only a Sunday reading-book, a museum of interesting antiquities. It must not be to you like an old railway guide, out of date, and valueless; it must be your order-book, the directory of your way of life every day.

You talk to me of your faith. There can be no true faith without obedience. Abraham's faith is commended, but how was that faith shown? By his prompt obedience in leaving the country which he loved and offering to sacrifice his darling son. If your faith is not shown in an altered life, in true repentance, in earnest amendment, in obedience to God's commandments—believe me, it is worth nothing. Be honest with yourselves; ask your hearts this question—"All these years I have been talking about my faith, about trusting to the merits of my Saviour; I have professed

certain religious views, I have called myself by this and that name, but one thing is needful. Jesus says, 'If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments.*' Now comes the question, Have I kept the commandments, am I trying to keep them now?" In spite of all our profession, our calling ourselves Christians, our going to Church, unless we are obedient to God, we are none of His. Try yourselves to-day, by the simple test of looking at Christ's commandments and then at your own lives. Jesus bids you to love your neighbour as yourself, and to think and speak kindly of those who have injured you. Now is that your practice? Jesus bids you to keep yourselves pure, and preserve your bodies in sanctification and honour as temples of the Holy Ghost.

My young brethren, think, have you kept this law—have you fought that terrible battle of the flesh, and conquered by the grace of God, and gone on "wearing the white flower of a blameless life;" or have you fallen like cowards, and stained the flesh for which Christ died? You listen to the Commandments here in Church, but do you try to obey them? You know what the Commandments say about temperance, about evil-

speaking, about anger. Yet knowing this, do you swear, do you exceed in strong drink, do you speak unkindly of others, do you quarrel with your neighbours? Let us not be satisfied till we get the true answer to these questions. I know that it is very hard to obey sometimes, very hard to bend our own rebellious wishes to God's Will. It is one of the severest struggles in the battle of life, and every man has to fight it out over and over again, but not alone, nor in his own strength, Jesus, Who pleased not Himself, will teach His servant to say, as He Himself said, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

Sometimes that obedience means an act of self-denial, when we give up what is dear to us as life. In the battle of life, he who fights the good fight will find that to lose his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's is to find it.

In former days, when a Scottish chieftain wished to summon all the members of his clan to some sudden warfare, he sent a wooden cross, blackened in the fire, and dipped in blood, throughout every village and hamlet in the countryside. This was called the Fiery Cross, or Cross of Shame, because it was a mark of disgrace and infamy if anyone refused to follow where the

Cross led, and to obey all the orders of the chieftain.

My brethren, the Cross of Jesus our Master is abroad; far and wide comes the command for us to follow Him, and to fight against the evil, and to keep the commandments of our Lord. "Whatsoever He saith unto thee, do it." "Lord, shew me the way of Thy commandments, and I shall keep it unto the end."

SERMONS ON THE PARABLE OF

The Ten Virgins.

SERMON V.

WAITING FOR THE BRIDEGROOM.

S. MATTHEW XXV. 1.

"Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

SOME time ago an accident happened in one of our Northern coal-pits, and several of the men were imprisoned for many hours. They were godly, praying men, and one of them especially, by his prayers and earnest words, helped the others to prepare for their fate, whatever it might be. By the dim light of a miner's lamp they could see that they were close prisoners, and that there was no hope of safety unless friends could reach them from outside. After a while the lamp flickered and went out, and they were in the awful darkness of the black mine. Their leader, however, still cheered his fellow-prisoners by saying—"Let us pray to God; *the light never goes out in Heaven.*" And so with the light of faith

burning brightly with them, the darkness ceased to trouble them, and in time they heard the welcome signal of those who would set them free.

We have all a lamp lighted from Heaven—the lamp of a pure and holy religion, fed by the grace of God. As long as our lamp burns bright we need fear no danger; the darkness is no darkness to us, the night is as clear as the day. “Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil.”

You, my brothers, as members of the Church of Christ, have the sacred lamp in your keeping. *How* are you keeping it? Are your loins girded, and your lamps burning? Let our Lord’s parable of the Ten Virgins help us to an answer. The earthly story shows us the bridegroom setting out to the bride’s house to bring her home. The Heavenly meaning points to Jesus, the Bridegroom, coming on the great day when He shall make up His jewels, and taking His holy Bride, the Church, to her eternal and glorious home in Heaven. The earthly story tells us of ten virgins who are the friends and companions of the bride, who are all provided with lighted lamps. In them we see a picture of ourselves.

All we who hold the Catholic Faith, who are

members of Christ's holy Church, who look for the Second Coming of the Lord, who believe that He shall come again at the end of the world to judge both the quick and the dead, are represented by the ten virgins who are friends of the Bride—the Church. Each of the virgins had a lamp. Everyone of us in his Baptism had the lamp of religion—of a pure faith once delivered to the saints—given to him, and the Holy Spirit was given like precious oil, that He might show forth his faith not only with his lips but in his life. To each of us was the command given—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" The duty of all those ten virgins was the same, to be ready for the coming of the bridegroom, and to meet him with their lamps burning, that they might enter into the joys of the marriage feast.

It is the same with us. We have all the same duty, to be ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must be prepared to meet Him when He comes to us *daily* in public and private worship, in the Sacraments and Ordinances of the Church. Every day we live we are, in one sense, going forth to meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ. When we kneel by our bedside in prayer, what are we doing but going forth to meet

the Bridegroom? When we come to God's House we are going to meet the Bridegroom. When we come to the Altar of Holy Communion, or carry our child to the Font of Holy Baptism, or lead him to the Bishop in Confirmation, we are going forth to meet the Bridegroom. As we know not the day nor the hour of our own death, nor of the Second Advent of Jesus, we must be prepared every day, and so that day will not come upon us unawares.

If we are daily going to meet the Lord in prayer, in praise, in the study of the Bible, in faith, in the honest discharge of our duties, then we shall not be ashamed when the day of our death comes, and we hear the message—"The Master is come, and calleth for thee." We shall not be unprepared when the great Day of Judgment comes, and the cry is heard—"The Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him."

The ten virgins, who represent, remember, all sorts and conditions of men in Christ's Church, all went to meet the bridegroom, but not all in the same way. Five had their lamps well supplied with oil, and burning brightly, five had taken no oil, and their lamps were just going out when the warning came. The virgins are not divided into

good and bad, into friends and enemies of the bridegroom ; they are described as of two classes, wise and foolish. They must all have been friends of the bridegroom, or they would not have gone to the marriage, and hence we learn that the foolish virgins do not represent the wicked, the open evil-liver, the unbeliever in God. It is for this very reason that the parable has a most terrible meaning for us who profess and call ourselves Christians.

If the five foolish, against whom the door was shut, meant those who live in sin and despise religion, we might think that the story had no special message for us. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we accept the teachings of the Gospel, we are Church-goers, we are respectable folk.

My brethren, the five foolish in the parable were all this. They believed in the bridegroom, and called themselves his friends. They accepted his invitation to the marriage feast, that is, they believed in the promises of the Gospel. Yet, for all this, the door was shut against them at last.

In another parable we read of a man at the marriage feast who had not on a wedding garment. He, like the foolish virgins, professed himself a

friend of the bridegroom, but he was cast out because he had not on a befitting dress. If we are to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus our Lord and Judge, we must have our lamps burning, or against us the door will be shut. We must have on the wedding garment, or we shall be cast into outer darkness.

A certain ungrateful king neglected to reward a faithful follower who had sacrificed all for his master's sake. Day after day the man lingered about the Court, in the hope of receiving his due, till the king, noticing his shabby clothes, sent a word that he must dress better, or absent himself from Court.

How differently our Heavenly King deals with us. He cares not how poor or humble we are, we may all alike enter His courts with praise, but still we must be rightly clothed, we must have the white robe of righteousness which He will give to all who ask Him faithfully.

We find the foolish virgins of the parable represented in every congregation, hence the warning of the story has a special meaning for us who profess religion. All the ten virgins seemed alike, whilst waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. All spent the time in the same

way; all had their lamps lighted at the first. So with this, or any other congregation. All seem alike to believe in the same God, to worship Him in the same way, to hold the same faith; all bear the same mark upon them which testifies to their belonging to the Church of Christ; all have the lamp of religion in their hand—that is, all profess religion. Yet they are not all alike, any more than the ten virgins were.

In every congregation, in every parish, there are the wise and the foolish, the wheat and the tares. When the bridegroom came, the difference between the foolish and the wise virgins was shown. The wise had their lamps burning brightly, because they had a supply of oil for the purpose; the foolish found their lamps just going out, because they had no oil.

So with ourselves. When the day of death comes, and after that the judgment, the difference between man and man will be clearly shown. Here, in the twilight of this world, we make many mistakes; we may think that all who profess religion are alike, that all who come to Church and follow the Service are like the wise virgins. When the great day of searching comes, when we shall all stand in that fierce light of

exposure, the difference will be seen, the true and the false, the *professing* Christian and the *true* Christian will be made manifest "in that day." All will be there with their lamps—their religious profession. But the religion of some will be shown forth in the clear light of a holy life, a life fed by the oil of divine grace, a life lived by the faith of the Son of God. The religion of others will be a name, and nothing more; a lamp which is useless because it is flickering, and dying out, which gives forth no light of holiness, because it is not fed by the oil of God's grace. A lamp which gives no light is useless, so is a religion which bears no fruit unto holiness, a faith which, being without works, is dead.

Now, dear brothers, since this parable is not addressed to the godless, the Sabbath-breaker, the scoffer, but to those who belong to the ranks of religion, and are Church-goers—such people as yourselves—we ought to ask ourselves the solemn question, never perhaps thought of by us before—"To which class do I belong, the wise, or the foolish?" We are all waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, waiting for death to call us hence, or for the moment when we shall be caught up living, to meet our Lord

in the air. *How* are we waiting? In our Baptism we all received the lamp of the Christian faith, and the oil of God's Holy Spirit to keep the lamp alight. But since then the light has been exposed to many dangers, to draughts of temptation, to storms of sin and passion, to the foul air of bad company. Have you guarded that precious light, and kept it so supplied with the oil of divine grace that it shines clear and true through the darkness of the world? Are we showing forth our faith, our religion, by our works, or are we content with the name of Christian, and an occasional formal visit to Church? Are we carrying about a lamp which gives no light, or are we letting our light so shine before men that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven?

If we have given all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity; if, in a word, we call ourselves Christians, yet bring forth no fruits of a Christian life, we are deceiving ourselves—the light that should be in us is darkness, our lamps are going out.

SERMON VI.

UNREADY CHRISTIANS.

S. MATTHEW XXV. 10.

“They that were ready went in with him to the marriage.”

THE Parable of the Ten Virgins is not a message to the unbelieving, but to those who declare openly in Church that they believe in God, that they look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come ; and the warning spoken is not for those who never prepare to meet their God, but for those who prepare in a careless, half-hearted way ; not for those who have no religion, but for those who have not enough. If the parable were intended for the open evil-liver, for the wilful breaker of God's laws, you might, as respectable, orderly Church-goers, turn aside from it with indifference. You might say to me—“ These words are not for us, we belong to the religious class ; we come to Church, we subscribe to charities, we say our prayers, we are respectable parishioners.”

But I tell you that the message of the parable is meant for just such as you. It is among the respectable, Church-going, professing Christians that we find the foolish, who have no oil for their lamps, and against whom at last the door is shut. The foolish virgins had lamps like those of the wise, but they were giving no light. How much of our religion is like that ! It is a lamp, but it gives no light ; it is a form without a use or meaning ; it has no love for God in it, no heart, no truth, no reality. We all profess the same religion, we have lamps alike, but some of us are showing forth our faith not only with our lips but in our lives ; others have a name that they are alive, and are dead, their lamps are going out.

I have heard of a man who had had business dealings for a long time with another who held a high position in the religious world. When the one was told of the other's strict attention to outward religious duties, he answered—"I have had dealings with that man for twenty years, but I never knew he was a Christian man."

The foolish virgins are a warning to those whose religion is formal and outside, instead of real and of the heart. Our Lord says of such people—"Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord,

shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the Will of My Father which is in Heaven. Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

It is an awful thought, my brothers, that some of us may be deceiving ourselves, and mistaking our Church-going or our respectability for true religion. Here, in God's Church, from time to time we cry—"Lord, Lord." We take holy words into our mouths; we call on God to hear our confessions; we style ourselves lost sheep and miserable sinners. But if our *hearts* are not in what we say, if we draw near to God but our heart is far from Him, if our thoughts and minds are engaged elsewhere, God will not accept such formal, worthless service. Such religion is of the lips, not of the heart; it brings forth no fruit unto holiness, and the people who cry "Lord, Lord," in Church on Sunday, show no love, no self-denial, no humility, no patience in the life and work of every day. They are like clocks which are out of order, which strike one hour and point to another. They

are the careless Christians whose religion dies out for want of attention, as a lamp grows dim for want of feeding and trimming. You have all seen how a neglected lamp will flash up for a moment with a very strong flame, and then sink down into almost darkness.

So it is with the careless Christian. One day he is full of zeal and energy for God's service—he will take a fit of extra attendance at Church, he will come frequently to Holy Communion, he will make a number of good resolutions. But presently all is changed. His zeal grows lukewarm, his good resolutions are broken, he becomes careless and neglectful of prayer; he is not feeding his lamp with oil, and it begins to flicker and grow dim.

This is the *shallow* Christian of another parable, in whom the good seed brought forth no fruit because it had no depth of earth. This, too, is the easy-going, indifferent Christian, who thinks that all will come right in the end, and trusts that his lamp will burn on, though he has taken no pains to secure a supply of oil. To all such people the parable speaks, and urges the necessity of watchfulness, that we may be ready when death calls us hence, or when the Lord shall come on the great Day of Reckoning. Specially, we are

warned of the *suddenness* and *unexpected character* of the call. At midnight, the time when most people are asleep, the cry shall be heard—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh!"

It was a tradition among the Jews that Messiah would suddenly come at midnight and set His people free, even as Israel of old was delivered at midnight out of the bondage of Egypt. If it be God's Will that we shall die before the second coming of the Lord, that, too, will be a sudden call. The actual moment of our death is nearly always unexpected, however long watched for. In many cases it may be said—

"We thought her dying whilst she slept,
And sleeping when she died."

And, again, the moment of our death is frequently about midnight. It is the time when the human system is at its lowest, and more people answer death's summons at that time than at any other.

"Those who were *ready* went in with him to the marriage." If we would be ready to meet the Lord in the last day, we must be ready every day. What does this *readiness* mean? It does not surely mean that we should

be always thinking and talking of death and the world to come with sad faces and gloomy tones. God has not sent us into this beautiful world as into a great graveyard, where we must be always digging a tomb.

It has been said that the principal object of the ancient Egyptians was to be well buried. There are too many Christians whose thoughts are taken up with dying instead of living. Let us but strive to live unto the Lord each day, doing our duty in the place where He has put us, making the most of the talents which He has lent us, loving our God and our neighbour, and then death can never find us unprepared, however sudden. Let us strive each day to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father in Heaven.

There are some people who are never ready at the right time. If they have to keep an appointment, they are not ready when the hour of meeting comes. If they have to take a railway journey, they are not ready, and they miss the train. This unreadiness is fatal enough in the affairs of everyday life. We know that an unpunctual, unready person is sure to fail. The child who is always unpunctual at school, the young man in business

who arrives half-an-hour late at his work, the contractor who is not ready with his goods on the day promised, the professional man who does not keep his appointments, soon find that others have passed them by, and that they are shut out amid the crowd of failures. The men who have risen, and made a name, often from lowly and insignificant beginnings, are the men who watched, who worked, who so late took rest, who denied themselves, who seized their opportunity—in a word, who were *ready*.

The same holds good in spiritual matters. Those who are unready in their religious duties, careless, and indifferent, and unpunctual in their spiritual lives, are those whose lamps are going out. They have no oil, and they do not seek for any, so the lamp of their religious life grows dimmer and dimmer. You would not expect the lamps in your house to burn properly if you never trimmed them, or fed them with oil. How can you expect that your life can shine before men with a clear, pure, strong light, if you neglect it, if you do not seek constantly for the Holy Spirit, which is to your soul as the oil to the lamp!

Yet there are many among us who hope one day to enter the Home of Jesus, who are not

ready, who are not watching their lives, their words, their deeds, who habitually neglect the means of grace. These are they who stay away from Church for weeks at a time. These are they who are invariably late for the Service, who never make their confession to God, or hear the words of the Absolution, because they are unpunctual. These neglect private prayer; some never pray at home, others once a day, and then hurriedly, and without thought. These never keep the lamp of religion burning at home by having family prayer, or Bible reading. These seldom or never draw near to the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Jesus bids them come, telling them that without that holy Food they have no life in them, that the light of their lamp is growing faint—and yet they refuse. Like the foolish virgins, they take no oil in their vessels.

My brothers, think on these things, and be wise in time. You would not go forth on a dark night carrying a lantern with no candle in it. You would not go on a long journey and bear a lamp which had no supply of oil. Why, then, will you try to journey through the darkness and dangers of this world, clinging to a form of religion which is not being fed by

God's Holy Spirit, which is a lamp without oil?

There is yet another reason why we are bidden to let our light shine before men. In the old days, before London was brilliantly lighted, the Lord Mayor commanded every householder to hang out a lantern from his dwelling on the dark evenings, and the watchman on his rounds would cry, "*Hang out your lights!*"

So the Christian must show a light for the sake of others. Every member of Christ's Holy Church is bidden to hang out his light as a guide, a comfort, and a warning to his brethren. The nearer we draw to God in prayer, in the Sacraments, in the reading of His Word, the clearer and brighter will our light be. There is a kind of diamond which, having been exposed to the rays of the sun for some time, will in a dark room continue to give forth light for a considerable period.

Let us continually draw near to Jesus, the source of all holiness and light, and we shall shine as the stars, not only here and now, but for ever and ever. As the face of Moses was full of brightness after he had been with God in the mount, so we shall shine before men with the light of a humble, holy life, if we climb often up the mount of prayer, and speak with God our Father.

SERMON VII.

THE CLOSED DOOR.

S. MATTHEW XXV. 10.

“ The door was shut.”

THERE are few words in our language more sad than those two little words “*too late*.” There are many different times and circumstances in this life in which the meaning of these fatal words comes home to us. A man starts to the railway station to catch a certain train; the greatest results depend upon his travelling by it—it may be a man’s life, a woman’s honour, a vast fortune are involved. He arrives at the station to find the train on the point of starting, the barrier is closed against him, he is *too late*, the door is shut. Or one has to post a letter; it is an answer on which depends his whole earthly future, his welfare or ruin; he reaches the post office to find that he is *too late*. A son has left home in disgrace; he has bowed his father’s head with

sorrow and shame. One day the message comes that his father is dying ; if he would see him once more, and hear his last words, he must hasten home. The prodigal turns eagerly homeward, hoping that he may receive his father's blessing and forgiveness before he dies. He finds his home silent, the blinds drawn across the windows, the hushed voices of mourners—he *is too late*.

For us all there is a time to get, and a time to lose ; a time when the door stands open, and a time when the door is shut. At one time the *door of youth* stands open, with all its opportunities of learning and advancement, its strength, its hopes, its prizes. If we neglect our chances then, if we spend our youth in idleness, in folly, in dissipation, the time comes when we find that the door is shut. We are no longer young, youth has passed by misused, neglected ; the harvest is close upon us, and we have not even sown the seed. All that we have sown are the wild oats of a wasted youth, and now comes a sad and sorry reaping.

How often we hear a man say, "I wish that I had my time over again ! If I could only be young again, I would lead a very different life !"

But it may not be, the time has come when the door is shut.

My young brothers and sisters, know your opportunity.

At one time the *door of health and strength* stands open. We have vigorous limbs and clear mind, but if we neglect our health, or injure it by our excess, the time comes when the door is shut. The strong arms are limp and feeble now. The nimble feet drag painfully along the ground; the once clear brain is clouded and uncertain. The door is shut.

So is it with all earthly opportunities. The door stands open for us to enter and succeed, and the time comes when the door is shut, and it is too late. A traveller on the sea shore saw a rare and beautiful shell cast up at his feet by the waves. It was so close to him, and easy to reach, that he decided that he could pick it up whenever he chose, and so turned aside for a while. But presently another wave came rolling in, and swept the shell away.

The precious jewel of opportunity is cast at our very feet. The chance of doing good, or getting good, is there for us to seize. If we neglect or delay, the opportunity is swept away, never to return. Too often we think, foolishly,

that the prize will remain for us to claim it when we like, that the door will always stand open for us to pass through when we are minded, but for all there is a time to get and a time to lose, a time when the door is open, and when it is shut.

Sometimes men find in lonely quarries, long abandoned, and once worked by vanished races, huge blocks of stone shaped and carved for some grand building. They were intended to form part of some temple or palace, but there they lie, neglected and forgotten, and the building for which they were meant has been built without them. So God has a place and a work for every one of us in the great temple of the universe, and if we neglect to fill our place and do our work, we are cast aside, the living monument of a wasted life.

But above all, it is true of our spiritual life, our religious time, that there is a time when the door stands open, and a time when the door is shut against us, as it was against the foolish virgins of the parable.

My brothers, be serious. You know well enough that in your earthly business matters, if you neglect your opportunity, it will not return. You know well enough that the man who omits to sow seed in the seed-time will have nothing to reap in the

time of harvest. You know well enough that a man who begins by neglecting his business will end in bankruptcy.

It is even so with our souls. As we sow shall we reap, as we use our opportunities so will our eternal future be. Men can no more gather grapes of thorns than can a careless Christian expect to enter through the gate of Salvation to the Marriage Feast of the Son of God. Think of the doors which God has set open before you. First, He set before you *the open door of Baptism*. Passing through that gate, we began our journey to the Heavenly City along the narrow way which leads to life everlasting. Then God set before us *the open door of the Church*—a home of rest and peace, a treasury of good things, a good land flowing with milk and honey, a storehouse of precious food, a hospital for the wounded and the weak, well provided with medicine to heal their sickness. Then, too, God set before us *the open door of Prayer*, through which we could pass into the very presence of our Heavenly King, and offer our petitions, and confess our faults, and ask for pardon. He set before us *the open door of Confirmation*, through which we could pass into God's armoury and put on the whole armour of God, and receive the

mighty, all-conquering sword of the Spirit. Then opened to us the golden door of Holy Communion ; then the way to the Altar was unbarred for us ; then the words of Jesus had a new and fuller meaning—"Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden ; come, for all things are now ready."

Over and over again doors have been opened for us, chances given us of going up higher, of forsaking sins, of leading purer lives. Sometimes the voice of conscience spoke, and a door of escape was opened. Sometimes a terrible warning was sent to us. We were struck down by sudden illness, we were brought very low. All that long, weary time of weakness and pain, when you were laid aside from the work of the world, was God's opportunity for you—He was opening a door for you to pass through and begin a new life. Or some loved member of our family was suddenly called away by death in the midst of health and strength. Surely that grave which opened so unexpectedly at our feet was meant as an open door of warning, that we might remember how short our time is, and learn so to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto Heavenly wisdom. Every blessing, every sorrow, every gain,

and every loss which God sends us, is a door of opportunity, by which we may come nearer to God, nearer to Heaven.

Now, let us ask ourselves how have we used those opportunities, those open doors ; how *are* we using them to-day ? Remember that the warnings of this parable are not so much for the open evil-liver as for the careless professing Christian, who thinks he loves God, and hopes for the salvation of Jesus. The door was shut against the five virgins not because they were godless, irreligious, unbelieving, but because they were not watchful, not ready ; they had lamps, but not enough oil.

So the door of eternal life will be shut against those who have a *form* of godliness but not the power thereof ; who call themselves Christians, yet are not careful to watch and pray ; whose profession of religion is a lamp which is going out for want of oil. We may believe that these careless, easy-going people, whose religion is shallow, whose lamp is flickering, are in far greater danger than the open sinner ; for he, if he repent, will be watchful, whereas, these ninety-and-nine careless, who think they need no repentance, take no care to have the oil of God's grace to keep their light shining.

My brethren, take hold of this great fact, that there comes a time when we cannot repent, nor find pardon. *Too late* belongs to spiritual things as well as earthly; the day comes for you, for me, for all, when the door is shut. "That door," says one of old, "which is now open to them coming from the East and from the West, that they may sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven—that door which saith, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.' Behold how it is now open, which shall then be closed for evermore. Murderers come, and they are admitted—publicans and harlots come, and they are received—unclean, and adulterers, and robbers, and whosoever is of this kind, come, and the open door doth not deny itself to them, for Christ, the Door, is infinite to pardon, reaching beyond every degree and every amount of wickedness. But, then, what saith He? The door is shut. No one's repentance, no one's prayer, no one's groaning shall any more be admitted. The door is shut which received Aaron after his idolatry—which admitted David after his adultery and homicide—which did not repel Peter after his three-fold denial."

The day comes for all when the door of this earthly life, with all its chances and opportunities, is shut finally. You have no doubt seen people in a street shutting their door, and putting up the shutters of their place of business, when night comes. The door is shut, but it is when the day's work is over. Sometimes, however, you see men putting up the shutters, and closing the door, whilst it is still mid-day. The owner of the business is bankrupt, he can no longer carry on his work. So is it with the death of the righteous and of the careless. The one dies when his life's work is over; the door of this earthly existence is shut, but the door of Paradise is open, and he is ready to pass in to the Heavenly Bridegroom's presence. The other dies, but his work is left undone, his lamp is flickering, he is not ready, and when the door of this life is shut upon him, there is none to open to him.

Beware, brethren of a death-bed repentance, and of trying to crowd all the duties of a long life of neglect into the last few hours of earthly existence. Whilst the foolish virgins were, at the last moment, seeking for the oil which they should have had long before, the bridegroom came, and the door was shut. Often whilst a

dying man is trying to remember the past, trying to confess his sin, trying to pray, or to make some last request, his mind refuses to act, his tongue cannot shape the words, his trembling hand fails to direct the pen. "He dies, and makes no sign"—the door is shut.

When one of our poets (Goldsmith) was dying, he was asked the question, "Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," was the sad answer; and so he passed away.

Let us watch and be prayerful every day, so that the last day of all may find us ready. Let us daily seek the oil of God's grace, that the lamp of our life may burn clear and steady, and men may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven. May it be said of us as of her of whom our great poet sings—

"Thy care is fixed, and zealously attends
To fill thy odorous lamp with deeds of light,
And hope that reaps not shame. Therefore be sure
Thou, when the bridegroom with his feastful friends
Passes to bliss in the mid-hour of night,
Hast gained thy entrance, virgin wise and pure."

SERMON VIII.

DROWSY CHRISTIANS.

S. MATTHEW XXV. 13.

“Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.”

ONE of the many lessons to be found in the Parable of the Ten Virgins is a warning to drowsy Christians. The virgins slept when they should have watched, they neglected their lamps, and when the sudden summons came to join the bridegroom they were not ready, and their lamps were going out. Again I remind you that this parable is not addressed to the godless, the unbelieving, or those who know not God. All the virgins were friends and followers of the bridegroom; all loved and honoured him; all hoped and intended to go to the marriage feast. Yet five entered with the bridegroom, and five were shut out.

So in speaking to you to-day, I speak to those

who think they love and fear God, who call themselves Christians, who come to Church, who pray, who read their Bible. All of you would tell me that you hope to be saved, that you hope to go into Paradise one day, and so be ever with the Lord, with Jesus, the Heavenly Bridegroom, in the Marriage Feast of the Church. Well, the five foolish virgins hoped that also, and yet against them the door was shut. They were rejected because they neglected their duty. They were bidden to be ready, to be watchful, to have their lamps burning, instead of which they slumbered and slept, without laying in a stock of oil.

It is a terrible thought, my brethren, how many amongst us are like those foolish virgins. They are sleeping, or at the least dozing, when they ought to be awake, watchful, careful, active. Oh, believe me, there is more hope for the publicans and sinners, the open evil-livers, some who never heard the Gospel message, than for the easy-going, drowsy Christian, who goes through his religious duties in a sleepy, formal way, whose conscience is slumbering, so that the warnings of God have no more effect than a whisper on a sleeping man.

My brothers, the oftener I see people assembled

in Church, the oftener I look into some of their lives at home, the more the question is pressed home to me—Will *nothing* rouse these sleepy souls ; will nothing show them their danger, and teach them that God will not accept their drowsy indifference as true service ; will nothing warn them that their heartless, formal, selfish religion is worthless, and that God is not mocked by those who are wide awake to the concerns of the world, and more than half asleep to the concerns of their soul ?

We often hear it said of a lazy person that he goes about his work as if he were half asleep. How true that is of the way in which many go about their religious duties ! Church-going, almsgiving, attendance at the Sacraments of the Altar, family prayer, Bible-reading, self-examination, watchfulness of tongue and temper—these plain duties are often neglected, or performed as listlessly as though we were walking in our sleep. What we all need is *waking up*, for we are all more or less drowsy in our religion.

Would that I could thus awaken you, but I cannot. People come to Church time after time as a habit, and the words spoken too often fall on drowsy ears, sleeping consciences, careless formalists, and do no good. God alone can awaken

the sleepy soul; Jesus, Who raised up Lazarus, and said, "I go to awake him out of sleep," can alone do the same for us. May He arouse us in time, that we sleep not in death.

Think of some who fell into grievous danger through sleeping when they ought to have been watching. The sluggard of the Proverbs asked for a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep. Meantime, his garden was over-run with weeds and his property spoilt. So the sluggard Christian neglects his vineyard, his spiritual state, and while he is sleeping, the enemy—the devil, comes and sows foul weeds, and his soul is ruined. Sisera, the great captain, sleeps in the tent of Jael. He was in danger, in the neighbourhood of enemies, yet he slept on, and the fatal nail was smitten through his temples.

So the drowsy Christian goes carelessly into bad company, and mixes thoughtlessly with the worldly and the ungodly, and whilst he sleeps in indifference, his faith and character receive their death blow. Young men mingle in the society of worthless and frivolous women, and pride themselves on the manliness of their folly or their vice, and all the time they are like Sisera sleeping in the enemy's tent, and the woman is ready to

strike destruction to their manhood and their honour. Jonah slept in the storm when he ought to have arisen and called upon his God. Others were praying, but he was sleeping, and knew not that there was but a step betwixt him and death. So with ourselves; a man goes on neglecting his prayers, careless, drowsy as to the welfare of his soul, and one day a sudden misfortune comes upon him unawares—he has to bear a terrible bereavement, or perhaps to meet death face to face, and he is all unprepared.

Again, King Saul slept in the trench on the battle-field when he should have kept watch. His deadly enemy Abishai, and his generous foeman David, came in the night watches and looked on the sleeping king. He was in their power, close to death, and he knew it not. Abishai would have smitten him with his own spear, and he grimly promised, “I will not smite him a second time.”

Many a sinful man or woman goes on thoughtlessly and carelessly, in the deadly sleep of indifference, and knows not that on that very night his soul shall be required of him. Some of us remember how one of the poor, degraded women of East London was heard singing “Sweet

Violets " just before the murderer's knife cut short her wretched existence.

Then again, the disciples of Jesus slumbered and slept in Gethsemane whilst our Lord was in His agony of suffering and prayer. In spite of their promises of devotion, they could not watch with their Master one hour ; and what followed ? They all forsook Him and fled. S. Peter denied Him thrice. If we cannot watch with Jesus, and suffer with Him, and take up our cross and follow Him, we shall forsake Him in the hour of trial, we shall deny Him in the time of danger. These drowsy Christians, whose religious senses are only half awake, seem to have mislaid their religion, just as some careless people mislay their property, and never know where to find it when required.

Oh, my brothers, if you are among the drowsy Christians, whose religious feelings are dull and heavy, like the feelings of a sleeper ; who think that the mere outward forms of religion will profit you without a new heart and a right spirit renewed within you ; who are trusting to the *name* of a Christian instead of trying to lead the life of a Christian—take warning from the foolish virgins of the parable, and awake out of your death sleep. Perhaps you will say to me—" We have no fear,

we are quite safe ; we have accepted the invitation of the Lord, we are called by His name ; we come to Church." And I answer you, that in spite of all this, the door may be shut against you at the last ; you may have been Church-goers, professors of religion, and yet may be lost after all. The foolish virgins fancied they were perfectly safe, and sure to enter into the marriage feast of the bridegroom. They had been invited, they accepted the invitation ; they knew the bridegroom, they were waiting for him ; they had their lamps. But they did not obey the bridegroom's commands. They were not watching for the summons ; they had not taken care of their lamps, and kept them trimmed and burning ; they were not ready.

My brethren, some of our lamps are giving a very poor light. We have neglected to trim them—to cut off from our lives anything which hinders us from shining clear and true. We have omitted to ask for a daily supply of oil, for daily help from on high ; we have forgotten to pray, " Forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts."

The foolish virgins were rudely awakened from their comfortable sleep of indifference to find

themselves shut out once and for all. They who thought they knew the bridegroom so intimately, are told, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Those are awful words to listen to at the last Great Day. What if we have been mistaken all this time, what if our profession of religion is a mere hollow, worthless thing; what if when we say, "Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in Thy Name, we have been Church-goers, we have always professed and called ourselves Christians," the answer should come, "Depart from Me, I never knew you."

God knows His own sheep, and is known of them; if we are His sheep we follow Him and *obey* His voice. There is the test of our religion, do we try to keep Christ's commandments? It is mere mockery to call ourselves Christians if we do not walk in His laws which He sets before us. We often say, "I judge a man by what he does, not by what he professes to do." So God judges us by our lives, our words, and works; by our fruits we shall be known. That final cry of warning has to come for you and me—"Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him." But from time to time the cry is heard now, warning us not to sleep

but to watch, and to have our lamps burning.

Whenever the Church bell rings for Divine Service it utters a message, a summons—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." The various seasons of the Church's year bring the same warning call. Advent, with its trumpet-call; Christmas, with its sweet associations; Lent, with its stern discipline; Easter, with its glorious joy; Whitsuntide, with its mysterious gifts, all speak the same message, though in different keys—"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him!"

"But what are Heaven's alarms to hearts that cower
In wilful slumber, deepening every hour;
That draw their curtains closer round,
The nearer swells the trumpet's sound?
Lord, ere our trembling lamps sink down and die,
Touch us with chastening hand, and make us feel Thee nigh."

SERMONS ON THE PARABLE OF

The Prodigal Son.

SERMON IX.

OUR FATHER'S HOUSE.

S. LUKE XV. II.

"A certain man had two sons."

AN English emigrant, in the backwoods of Canada, wrote home lately to his friends, and said, "I would give thirty pounds to hear the sound of a Church-going bell." Many a prodigal son has felt the same after he came to himself. He has felt that he would give all he possessed if he could be as in the days that were past, if he could stand once more within his father's house, and look again upon his father's face.

Let me speak to you to-day of that old, old story of the Gospel, the story of the Prodigal Son. Like the ocean, although so old, it is ever new, ever displaying some new beauty, some fresh light. It touches the heart of the careless and disobedient to-day, as it touched such hearts in the past, when Jesus was here among men.

It brings tears to the eyes of some awakening sinner now, as it did when it was first told by Him Who spoke as never man spake. It is a story, too, which appeals to each one of us, since who is there, high or low, rich or poor, who has not at some time, and in some sense, been a prodigal, wandering from his Father's house, wasting his substance, trying to satisfy himself with the dry husks of worldliness?

It is not only for the hot-headed, inexperienced youth, with the blood of young life strong within him, that this parable has its lessons. There are grey-haired men, occupying, perhaps, high places in the State, envied and flattered by the world, who know that they are prodigals, who know that what the world has given them is merely husks which satisfy not, who know that they have left God and God's House, and joined themselves to some citizen of the world, and sacrificed truth, and honour, and principle, for the sake of gain or earthly glory. Such men may wear purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, but their soft clothing covers a guilty conscience and an aching heart. They know that when their earthly home is broken up, they have no home eternal in the Heavens, they have wandered from their

Father's House, and chosen deliberately the ways of sin; they have loved darkness better than light, because their deeds were evil. Of such an one it may be said—

“So fallen! So lost! The light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
For evermore!
All else is gone! From those sad eyes
The light is fled;
When faith is lost, when honour dies,
The man is dead.”

Yes, the man is dead. He who deliberately forsakes his Father's House for the ways of the world, and the company of sinners; who breaks the commandments of his God, and becomes a law unto himself; who loses faith and love for his Father, and sells his heavenly birthright for a miserable mess of this world's pottage; who exchanges the bread of life for the husks of worldly pleasure; such an one is dead, dead in trespasses and sin, dead to all good feeling, dead to all that is pure and noble. From such a death there is only one resurrection, one way of escape, and that is the way of repentance leading back to our Father's House, and our Father's pardon.

In speaking of this Parable of the Prodigal we shall look on the blessedness and peace of home in our Father's House. We shall look on the selfishness of sin, on the so-called pleasures of sin, and on the sorrows of sin. We shall look on the precious picture of true repentance, and over all the story we shall see, like a light from Heaven, the great love of God our Father yearning over His prodigal children, and offering a welcome home to the returning penitent.

And first, we look on the son, not yet a prodigal, in peace and comfort in his father's house. As long as he was content to do his duty, and obey his father's will, all was well. His needs were supplied; he wanted no manner of thing that is good. That son is the type of ourselves. As long as we are walking in the way of God's commandments, making His Will our rule, striving to do our duty, and using the means of grace which He has given us, all is well. We are like happy children in a happy home; each day brings its duties and its delights, and we have no fear for to-morrow. The peace of God which passeth all understanding rests upon our hearts, because we are at home in our Father's House, close to God. Here, in our Father's House, we have all

things for the asking, all things requisite and necessary as well for the body as the soul. To us is the promise given, "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

As feeble, trembling infants we are brought into our Father's House in Holy Baptism. The foulness born with us is washed away in fair water, and we are clothed in white, which is the badge of all our Father's children. Day by day we are taught the lessons of our Father's family. In time, strengthening hands of blessing are laid upon us in Confirmation, and we are fitted for our daily battle with sin, our daily work in the way of duty. Our souls are fed and nourished with the holy, mysterious Food of the Altar; if we fall into the sickness of sin, there is the medicine of repentance, and the healing balm of absolution. All these belong to us now, and in the future we are promised such good things as pass man's understanding in some of the many mansions of our Father's House.

And yet there are those who grow weary of their Father's House and their Father's love. It was so with the Prodigal; it is so with thousands of others—sons and daughters, day after day.

Believe me, there is no greater happiness to be found in this life than that of a contented, obedient child at home. There is no treasure in this earth half so valuable as the sweet, self-denying love of parents. The kiss of a good mother, the counsel of a good father, are worth more than thousands of gold and silver. Too often we do not value our blessings rightly till we have lost them. Esau was willing to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, but when he finds what he has lost, and the blessing gone also, he utters an exceeding bitter cry. We do not value our blessings till they are gone. We do not recognize the angel by our side till he spreads his wings and flies from us. We do not rightly understand the comfort of home till we are homeless, or realize the love of father or mother till the grave closes over them.

The Prodigal grows weary of home. Why? Because he has become *selfish*. As long as he loved his parents best, their wishes were his law, their happiness was his first thought. When he grew to love himself and his own way, all love for father and mother died out; he grew weary of their words, impatient of the rules and restraints of the household; he longed to be his own master, and to have his own way. His great desire was

to get away from his father's house. Home life was all changed, a barrier seemed to have come between him and his parents. Once he looked upon them as his best friends, he told them his troubles, he ran to them for help and comfort. Now all this is altered; he has secrets from them whom he used to trust. Once he could look father and mother fairly and honestly in the face; it is not so now. There are secrets which are poisoning his life, and making home hateful. The daily round of household duties is dull and wearisome to him; he wants to be free, to go where he will, to do as he likes best. He knows that he owes obedience to his parents; he knows that they have done and suffered much for him, but he cannot know *how* much. The child who breaks his parents' hearts by his wilfulness, can never know all the agonized prayers, the sleepless nights, the saddened days, which his sin has caused.

The Prodigal determines to leave home. His selfishness has poisoned all the sweet home life for him. He asks his father to give him the portion of goods which in time would come to him. Here we see the selfishness which ever marks the Prodigal son. His father has toiled

hard for this money, and the son expects him to spend his hard-earned goods on the Prodigal's selfish pleasures. The parents may stay at home with reduced means, and meagre food, but the Prodigal must go forth and enjoy himself. They may weep bitter tears, but his mouth must be filled with laughter.

The selfish sinner cares not what suffering he may cause to others. A father in America, who had a wild and profligate son, tried every means to keep him from going night after night into bad company and evil ways. One night the old man begged his prodigal son with tears to stay at home, and the son refused, and tried to pass through the door. The father flung himself on the ground, in the opening of the door, and cried, "If you pass out, it must be over my body." The young man trampled on his father's body, and passed out to his sin.

So is it with those who sin against our Heavenly Father. The pleadings and loving warnings of God are unheeded; the selfish Prodigal will not be kept back from his evil way; the laws of God, the promises of the Gospel, alike are cast aside, he goes forth to his sin, and tramples under foot the precious Blood of Christ.

SERMON X.

LEAVING HOME.

S. LUKE XV. 13.

“Not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living.”

THE first downward step in the Prodigal's progress is taken when he grows tired of his father's house and his father's words. It is the same in the case of the disobedient child of an earthly father, or the sinner against our Father in Heaven. In the one case the son is tired of home, and impatient of home restraint. In the other, the sinner wants his own way instead of God's way, and so the Church and its holy teachings are no more for him.

They tell us that in crossing the great Sea of Ice which forms the largest and most dangerous glacier in Switzerland, the traveller comes to a place called the “*Mauvais Pas*”—the dangerous step. It is a narrow way, scarcely a foot in width,

running along the side of the mountain. Above it is a wall of rock, below it, at a depth of some hundred feet, lies the glacier, a frozen sea, with its sharp points of ice and rock. If the traveller slips on that narrow path, he is dashed below on the cruel Sea of Ice, and killed. Yet no one need fall there. The guides have fixed a strong rope along the mountain-side, and as long as the traveller holds on firmly to that rope he cannot fall.

As we journey on through life, there is for everyone of us a *Mauvais Pas*—a dangerous bit of road. Frequently we come to it in youth, when the fire of manhood springs up within us, and “the fever called living” waxes strong. The young man or woman entering life, quitting the restraints of school or home, comes to this dangerous road. The boy exchanging a quiet, godly home for a great public school; the young man passing from the homely village life to the rush, and roar, and temptation of a great city; the girl going from a mother’s care and counsel to a place of business and the companionship of other girls—each has his *Mauvais Pas*, his bit of dangerous travelling. If he falls, it means the injury, perhaps the ruin, of his soul. The fall on to the Sea of Ice—the

frozen glacier—would be certain death. The fall from right to wrong, from purity to sin, always kills something good in us. No man or woman is the same after sinning as before. The man who slips off the path when he comes to the dangerous road of temptation, will certainly knock some of the manhood out of him. He may repent and be cured of his sin, but he carries a scar upon him through life. God does not forget, and the sinner cannot forget. Do you suppose that Esau in the after years ever forgot how he sold his birthright? Do you think that David in his last hours did not remember the sin which had spoiled his life? When we fall into sin, though true repentance and God's mercy may restore us, we have lost what nothing can give back; we have bruised "the white flower of a blameless life;" we have soiled the pure robe; we have lost the bloom of innocence.

I said that along that dangerous path in Switzerland there was a strong rope fixed, and that those who held fast to it were safe. We have a like protection along the hard, perilous path of temptation. The love of God, as shown to us in our holy religion, is our safeguard. As long as we hold fast to that we cannot fall. The man who loves God,

who clings to Him by prayer, by the Sacraments and Ordinances of the Church, by the reading of His Word, will pass safely over the dangerous path. Let him hold fast to the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and he shall go on uninjured, like the traveller grasping the protecting rope.

Let the young man, sorely tempted to lose his purity, his virtue, to defile the body which Jesus died to redeem, hold fast to God's Hand. If he quits his religion, he is letting go the only rope that can save him. If he but hold fast, if he clings to prayer, if he holds on to his Bible, if he clasps his Saviour in the Sacrament of the Altar, his footsteps shall not slip, the voice of the tempter shall not prevail; God shall keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Him, and deliver him from his strongest enemy.

O, young men and maidens, and you, my older brothers, when you come to the dangerous path and the way of temptation, hold fast to the rope, "hold that fast that thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

The Prodigal Son in the parable came to the dangerous path, but he let go the rope. He cut himself off from his father's house and his father's counsel, and he fell. And now his great desire

was to get away from his father's presence. The once happy home—happy as long as it was innocent—was spoilt by the Prodigal's sin. Everything seemed changed to him, just as things seem changed to the diseased fancy of a sick man. His father's smile, his mother's gentle voice, "the old familiar faces," the scenes of home, were no longer what they had been. As Eden seemed a different place to Adam after he had sinned and lost his innocence, so the home of the Prodigal was no longer the same as it had been to the innocent boy. All the music of his life was "out of tune and harsh." Many a prodigal has echoed the poet's words—

"No skies so blue or so serene
As then; no leaves looked half so green
As clothed the playground tree!
All things I loved are altered so,
Nor does it ease my heart to know
The change resides in me!"

The sure beginning of the downward road is when a child loses love for home and parents; when he is ashamed to look his father in the face, or whisper his secrets in his mother's ear. The same sin which draws him away from his earthly home, leads him away from God and God's House.

The old, old words of the Bible, the unchanging promises of the Gospel, lose their meaning for the Prodigal ; the music of chant and psalm lose their melody ; the voice of the Church-going bell no longer sounds like the message of a friend ; selfishness, the root of all sin, has changed him, and spoiled his taste for all that is pure and holy. And now the Prodigal desires to get as far as possible from his father ; the sinner longs to hide himself from God. He determines to go away from the sights and sounds of home ; “ he gathers all together, and takes his journey into a far country.” Over and over again we see this in the case of the wilful sinner. He shrinks from the doors of the Church ; he hides away his Bible, or pretends to sneer at it ; he forsakes his prayers ; he looks on God’s minister as his enemy. He is trying to get into the far country away from God.

Notice that the father of the Prodigal did not force his son to remain at home. God, our Heavenly Father, does not compel us to do right. He has given us a free will. We can sin if we desire it. If we love darkness better than light, we can abide in the darkness. God will not keep us in His family if we deliberately

choose to stay outside. We can go into the far country if we prefer it to home.

The lost sheep in the parable was lost through weakness, or want of sense. The piece of silver was lost by accident, but the Prodigal Son was lost by his own deliberate act. God raises no miraculous barrier to stop those who sin of malicious wickedness.

The Prodigal goes into a far country, that is to say, a life of sin, where God is not in all his thoughts. The son who has left home with his father's blessing, and is seeking his fortune in the Colonies, or on the sea, or in some great city, and who carries the love of his parents with him, is at home in heart, though parted by many a weary mile from those he loves. So the man who loves God, and is dwelling in some vast wilderness, far from the sound of Church bells, is still at home. He can look up to God's sky above him, and know that wherever he is his Father's loving eye is upon him. There, in that lonely land, he can draw near to God in prayer, he can read the story of his Saviour's love, and so he is not alone, for his Father is with him. Not so with the Prodigal. He may live beneath the shadow of Cathedral towers, within sight of

home, and yet, if love be dead in him, he is in a far country, far from his Father's House.

"He wasted his substance in riotous living." He used the gifts of his father for mere selfish purposes. God our Father has given us powers, and faculties, and talents—these form our substance. Health, strength, beauty, cleverness, knowledge—these are the gifts of God. These must be used in His service, and to His glory. We are sent into the world for this very purpose, to set forth the glory of God, and to set forward the salvation of all men.

If we use our powers, be they great or small, only for our own benefit, if we never help others to do right, or even lead them wrong, then we are prodigals, wasting our substance in riotous living. The man who uses his keen intellect only for his own advancement, and shuts God out of his life; the man who uses his influence only to gain a high position for himself, the man who tills God's earth merely to fill his own stomach, and never thinks that it is *God's* earth—such as these are prodigals wasting their substance in riotous living.

It needs not that a man should be a drunkard or a profligate to be a prodigal. Such men *are*

prodigals, of course ; they are wasting the life, the health, the money which God gave them, in rioting and drunkenness. But every selfish man is a prodigal ; he has forgotten his Father, and gone into a far country apart from God. Such people look on God's world, and its beauties, and its gifts as their property, and leave God out of it. They have not understood what those words mean, " Whether ye eat, or whether ye drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." As says a writer of our day (Ruskin), such men think " the meat is more than the life, and the raiment more than the body ; who look to the earth as a stable, and to its fruits as fodder ; they are vinedressers and husbandmen who love the corn they grind, and the grapes they crush, better than the gardens of the angels upon the slopes of Eden ; hewers of wood, and drawers of water, who think that it is to give them wood to hew, and water to draw, that the pine-forests cover the mountains like the shadow of God, and the great rivers move like His eternity. But God has not cloven the earth with rivers, only that their white, wild waves might turn wheels and push paddles ; He brings not up His quails by the east wind, only to let them fall in flesh about

the camp of men ; He has not heaped the rocks of the mountain only for the quarry, nor clothed the grass of the field only for the oven."

Every selfish life is the life of a Prodigal—a wasted life. The Germans tell us of a selfish and avaricious governor, who, when the people were starving from famine, gathered together all the corn he could obtain, and stored it in his tower on the Rhine, shutting himself in with plenty, whilst the people hungered outside. But the stores of grain attracted such vast numbers of hungry rats, that all the food was devoured, and the wretched man himself was torn to pieces.

So is it with the Prodigal who wastes the good gifts of God upon his own selfish wish and pleasure ; what he had, he loses ; he wastes his substance in riotous living, and presently, when he has spent all, there arises a famine, and he begins to be in want, whilst remorse devours him.

SERMON XI.

IN WANT.

S. LUKE XV. 14.

“And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.”

THERE is an old legend of the north land, which tells us of a mysterious haunted mountain, where Venus, the goddess of beauty and of lust, had her abode. There stood the mountain, dark and mysterious, in a fair and smiling valley. One day a youthful pilgrim journeyed that way, and as he drew near the mountain, fair forms of women rose before him, white hands beckoned him, soft whispers called him, telling him of the delights of the Court of Venus. The youth yielded to the whispering words, and followed the beckoning hands, and presently the mountain seemed to open to him, and he passed from sight into the sins and delights of the home of Venus. A year and a day passed, and the mountain once more

opened to let the youth go forth. He passed into the world, but only like the shadow of his former self. Instead of the young man, full of life, and hope, and brightness, he was now bent and weary, with sad, worn face, and hollow, hopeless eyes. He had longed to look again on God's pure sky and sunshine, but the light seemed to blind his eyes. He had longed to see once more his fellow-men, but they knew him not, and shrank back from him. He had gone away from faith, and purity, and honour, and now his place knew him no more. He had spent all on sin, and he began to be in want.

It is the same with every Prodigal. At first the ways of sin and self-pleasing seem strewn with flowers. At first the down-hill road is easy. At first the Prodigal rejoices in what he calls his freedom in being his own master. But the pleasure soon fades; he finds life "flat, stale, and unprofitable;" sin, which he thought so sweet, has lost its taste, and he is—

"Lord of himself—that heritage of woe,
That fearful empire which the human breast
But holds to rob the heart within of rest."

Sin always brings its servants to want. It is

something like opium-eating. That fatal drug at first gives its victims delightful dreams and fancies ; but they wake up to an unsatisfied longing, to ruined health, to premature decay. Sin, like the usurer of old, will have its pound of flesh, will exact the uttermost farthing. When a Prodigal begins his course he is like a man borrowing of some hard money-lender. He is full of joy and laughter, for he has the money in his grasp. But by-and-bye comes the day of reckoning ; he has spent all, and the famine has come, and he is in want.

My brothers, when you are tempted to be as the Prodigal, *look to the end*. You look upon the young man walking in his own way, and boasting of his freedom, and laughing at restraint, and you think, perhaps, that you would like to follow in his steps. Look to the end ; look at the same man ruined by his wilfulness and disobedience, starving by the swine-trough, homeless, friendless, disgraced, and wretched. Go into our prisons, our workhouses, our lunatic asylums, and see there ruins of manhood, wrecks of humanity, and you will learn that these were prodigals, who walked in their own way, and wasted their substance in riotous living, and now they are

paying the penalty—such is the end of them.

These ruined men—criminals some of them, madmen not a few—were once innocent, happy children. Those faces, now lined and scarred with every evil vice and passion, were once consecrated by a mother's kiss.

A great writer of our day has described some rough, lawless gold-diggers listening to the song of an English skylark under Australian skies. The familiar music of the bird recalls the time when these prodigals were innocent and happy in their father's house. "These shaggy men, full of oaths, and strife, and cupidity, had once been white-headed boys, and had strolled about the English fields with little sisters and little brothers, and heard the lark sing this very song. The little playmates lay in the Churchyard, and they were full of oaths, and drink, and lust, and remorse—but no note was changed in this immortal song. And so for a moment or two years of vice rolled away like a dark cloud from the memory, and the past shone out; they came back, bright as the immortal notes that lighted them, those faded pictures and those fledged days; the cottage, the old mother's tears when he left her without one grain of sorrow; the village Church with its simple

chimes, the clover field hard by in which he lay and gambolled, whilst the lark praised God overhead; the chubby playmates that never grew to be wicked, the sweet hours of youth, and innocence, and home."

The sight of a ruin is ever a sad one, but saddest of all is it to look on the ruin of a man made in God's image, made to be pure, and noble, and upright, and just.

When the Prodigal had spent all, he began to be in want. If you were to visit the gambling-houses which disgrace the Continent, and are not unknown amongst ourselves, you would see the story of the Prodigal Son over and over again, but without its brighter ending. You would see the gambler with his hands full of money and his face full of smiles. Presently, when he has spent all, you will see that same gambler, with white, set face, and despair in his eyes, rushing forth from the scene of his ruin, hurrying perhaps to suicide. You look at the drunkard in his day of festivity, and you think, perhaps, what a happy life he leads. Lift the curtain a little later, and look on the last scene of such a life—ruin, disgrace, a maddened brain, quivering limbs, and trembling lips. When he has spent all, he begins to be in want.

It is ever so with the sinner against God our Father. He wastes God's gifts upon his sins, he spends all, and he begins to be in want. Like Israel of old, "hungry and thirsty, his soul faints within him." He is in want of a home, of a father, of a friend. He is in want of peace—that peace which the world cannot give. "There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked." The sinner in his restless misery asks sympathy of the world, even as Judas asked it of the Chief Priests. And the world answers him even as they answered Judas—"What is that to us? see thou to that." The companions of the Prodigal, who had been the partners of his sins, forsook him when he had spent all. Those who had revelled and gambled with him, cast him out of doors when he had nothing left—"the way of transgressors is hard." And now the Prodigal falls lower and lower. Instead of the comforts of home and the society of his equals, he herds with the swine, and is worse fed than they. In place of the best robe there are rags—he has lost all. Yes, sin ever robs us of all—of good name, of right feeling, of self-respect. A convict ceases to be known by his name; he is recognized merely by a number among other felons. So the sinner loses his name,

the name of God's child, an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven; he has disgraced his Christian name, dishonoured his father; he has spent all, and he is in want.

Whilst the Prodigal is absent from home in the far country, the loving heart of his father yearns over him, and longs for him. Ah, it is ever so with those who love us. *We* may be thoughtless, careless, selfish, but true love still clings to us, and mourns for us. David's heart was breaking with love for handsome, treacherous Absalom; many a parent's heart is sore to-day for some prodigal away in the far country, far from home. There stands the vacant chair he used to occupy; and to the mother's eyes the child is there as he used to be in his innocence, when "Heaven lay all around him in his infancy," and no thought of evil had clouded his young brow. And now that once innocent boy is a wanderer on the face of the earth, stained and hardened by sin; yet the parents' hearts go out to him in his unknown wanderings. We ever love best that which we have lost. You speak to a mother about her children at her knee, but her thoughts fly sadly to the little graves in the Church-yard. You praise the work of the eldest son, but

the father's heart is sorrowing after the younger, the Prodigal in a far country. Those who are still with us can never exactly fill the place of those who are gone. As says the poet of his dead child—

“ Our Rose was but in blossom ;
Our life was but in spring ;
When down the solemn midnight
We heard the spirits sing ;
‘ Another bud of infancy
With holy dews impearled ; ’
And in their hands they bore our wee
White Rose of all the world.

You scarce would think so small a thing
Could leave a loss so large ;
Her little light such shadow fling
From dawn to sunset's marge.
In other springs our life may be
In bannered bloom unfurled,
But never, never match our wee
White Rose of all the world.”

My brethren, God our Father, Jesus our Saviour, feel that yearning love for those of us who have wandered from home as prodigals. The Good Shepherd leaves the ninety and nine sheep in the wilderness, and goes after one which has strayed. He has come “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Our Holy Mother—the Church—like

the woman in the parable, lights a candle, and sweeps, and searches diligently for the one lost piece. The angels of God in Heaven do not rejoice over the ninety-nine self-righteous, who think they have no need of repentance, but over the one sinner who repents. Jesus tells us that He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. It is not to the proud, self-satisfied man from the uppermost seats in the synagogue that Christ's invitation comes; it is to the weary and heavy-laden, sad with sorrow and sick with sin, that the gracious words are spoken—"Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." It is to the poor, stained, yet penitent woman, trembling beneath the fierce looks of the Jewish rulers; it is to Magdalene, weary of the streets of a sinful city, or to the humble publican, bowed down to the earth before his God, that the blessed words are spoken—"Thy sins be forgiven thee."

My brothers, if any of you are prodigals in the far country, disobedient to God's laws, remember this—God still loves you. As a father pitieth his children, so the Heart of God longs after you. God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live.

In the far country there is sorrow, want, hunger of the soul, foul rags, dishonour. In our Father's House there is enough and to spare, safety, peace, plenty. Brothers, which shall we choose—the slavery of sin, or the glorious freedom of the sons of God?

SERMON XII.

REMEMBERING THE PAST.

3. LUKE XV. 17.

“When he came to himself.”

I HAVE read of a man who, as a child, had been carefully trained by a good and loving mother. The man left home, and out in the world fell into many temptations and dangers. The freshness and innocence of early youth were gone ; the teachings and warnings of his mother were forgotten ; the memories of home grew dim. Temptations thickened around him, and he was in great danger of falling. One night, as he sat alone in his lodgings, he heard voices from the next room. They were the low, tender voice of a woman, and the voices of two little children. The mother was teaching the little ones their evening prayer, and presently there came to the ears of the listening man the once familiar words—“ Our Father, which art in Heaven . . . lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil." They were the very words which he had said so often at his mother's knee. For an instant it seemed as if it were his mother's voice which he heard. With a bound his memory went back through the years, and a child again, he was kneeling beside his mother. Then lifting his eyes to Heaven, as she had taught him long ago, the man, whose heart had become as the heart of a little child, prayed that prayer—"Deliver us from evil." The hour of darkness and temptation passed; the man was no longer standing in slippery places, but his feet were set upon a rock. That praying mother little knew that she had saved a tempted soul from sin.

Some such memory of the past came to the Prodigal in the far country away from home. Such memories, such visions, have haunted many wanderers from the right way. The German poet tells us of a robber who, in his lawless stronghold beside the Rhine, remembered the days when he, a little child, could not sleep unless his mother had kissed him. Danton, one of the blood-stained leaders of the French Revolution, thought lovingly in his latter days of the little village where he was born, and visited the simple farm where he spent his childhood. Napoleon, a crushed and ruined

man, could recall with a sigh the day when he received his first Communion in his innocent boyhood long ago. Many a one in his hour of remorse and misery has echoed the words of Job—"Oh, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness ; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle."

The Prodigal—homeless, friendless, starving—remembers his home, his father's loving care of him, his mother's tender schooling. He can see, as in a vision, the old house where he was born, the garden where he played as a child, the flowers that he had trained, the trees that he had climbed. He had grown tired of home—now how he longed to see it once more! In his father's house there was plenty of bread and to spare, and the loving ministry of his parents, and the Prodigal had forsaken all these for the swine-trough and the husks. Well might he cry, with another sorrowful and lonely man—

"Would I might
But be your little child to-night,
And feel your arms about me fold
Against this loneliness and cold."

Most bitter of all the memories of the Prodigal must have been the knowledge of his ingratitude and sin. He had caused bitter sorrow to the loving heart of his father; perhaps he had brought his mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Ah, my brothers, it is a terrible thing to remember, when the grave closes over our father or mother, when the last words are said—"ashes to ashes, dust to dust!"—that we caused that loving heart keen sorrow by our sin, and that now the lips which might have spoken forgiveness are cold and dumb. Many a one has echoed the same wish as he who wrote of his dead mother—

"Oh, would that I could see thee in thy Heaven
For one brief hour, and know I was forgiven
For all the pain and doubt, and rankling shame
Which I have caused to make thee weep or sigh.
Bootless the wish! for where thou art on high
Sin casts no shadow, sorrow hath no name."

No repentance can undo the past, or change the consequences of sin. True repentance will, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, bring us pardon, but it will not make us what we were. Every sinner learns sooner or later that "the tender grace of a day that is dead can never

return to him." You may shed bitter tears over your parents' grave, you may repent truly of having broken their hearts by your sin and disobedience, but this will not bring them back from the grave. The impure man may repent of his past uncleanness, and may find pardon, but he cannot find innocence, he cannot forget the past. And more than this, he cannot undo the consequences of his sin. You, my brothers, may have repented of the sins of your youth, but that repentance will not restore the ruined character, or the lost name of some once innocent woman. It will not call back the victim of your sin, driven to suicide, or to a life that is worse than death. The drunkard, the profligate, may repent, but that will not restore the ruined health, and the poisoned mind.

Sin is like a mark burnt in with a red-hot iron, it leaves a lasting scar. (We cannot undo the past, but we can remember it. One of the hardest punishments of sin is remorse, the memory of our misdeeds eating into our very heart. It comes to every sinner sooner or later. It came to the Roman Cataline, so that he started at the slightest sound "like a guilty thing." It came to the

French tyrant, Louis XI., and made him cry and tremble on his miserable death-bed. It came to the English tyrant, Richard III., and made him spring up in the night, and seize his sword and fight with shadows. It came to Bishop Gardiner in his last hours, and, as he remembered the innocent victims whom he had sent to the flames, he cried, "I have sinned with Peter, but I have not repented with Peter." It came to the Prodigal in his want and sorrow, and he learnt that the greatest misery is to remember happier times in the hour of our wretchedness, and to cry, "O death in life, the days that are no more!"

It was when he was coming to himself that the Prodigal thought on the past, and remembered what he had lost. He came to himself; that means that before he had been like one out of his mind, or as in a swoon. Every sinner who goes on in his sin is like a madman, or a man insensible. No one in his right mind would leave a good home for the swine trough. No one but a madman would exchange a loving father for strangers, fair robes for foul rags, good food for husks. No one in his senses would lose his peace of mind and happiness, and take in the

place of it an accusing conscience and the stings of remorse.

The man who deliberately sins against God is a madman. He is sinning against his best Friend ; he is breaking the laws which are made for his good ; he is barring and locking the door of his eternal home against himself. He is a suicide ; he is killing himself. We speak of one who takes his life in a moment of frenzy as being insane : what shall we say of him who knows what is right, yet deliberately does wrong ; who throws away on sin the precious life which God has given ?

The Prodigal came to himself ; and that coming to himself was a painful process. He looked back mournfully on his past. They tell us that persons who are rescued from drowning feel no pain till they are being restored—then they suffer agonies. So the sinner who remains in his sin is insensible to all that is good ; he is as a madman, or one in a trance ; but when he begins the way of repentance he suffers—like the man recovered from drowning, he is being restored from death unto life. His eyes must gush out with bitter tears like those of S. Peter before he can look on his Saviour's smile of pardon.

The hardened heart must be melted with sorrow

for the past, before he can determine to amend for the future. Yes, repentance brings pain to the man who has been buried in the depths of sin, as the restoration of the man drowned in the deep waters brings pain, but it restores him to his right mind, it restores him to his home and his father's presence ; whereas he was blind, now he sees—he comes to himself.

Some who hear me now may think that these words have no meaning for them. They may fancy that they have never been prodigal sons or daughters. If you have never sinned against earthly parents, have you not sinned against your Father which is in Heaven? He has fed and clothed you all these years; He has led you safe through the wilderness of this world; He has never failed you, never forsaken you, never forgotten you. He has been about your path, and about your bed, and you have wanted no thing that is good.

And what shall we say of ourselves? Have we not sinned against God our Father over and over again; have we not refused to obey the voice of the Lord our God, and to walk in His laws which He set before us? Have we not, over and over again, left undone the things

which we ought to have done, and done those things which we ought not to have done? Have we not left our Father's House, and the way of His commandments, to follow the devices of our own hearts? Have we not wasted the precious gifts of God on unworthy objects, or selfish sins? Oh, that God would open the eyes of all here to see themselves as they really are!

In the days of the Great Plague of London, men and women would pass along dressed in their purple and fine linen, and quite unconscious that they were stricken with the plague. Then presently the physician would tear aside the rich clothing, and show them the fatal mark, the plague spot which meant death.

Would to God that we could tear aside the cloak of respectability to-day, the glossy dress of profession, or indifference, and bring to light the plague spot of sin! All the sermons, all the services of the Church are useless to us as long as we do not see our sins, and therefore our need of repentance. There was no hope for David till God's voice, speaking by His prophet, cried—"Thou art the man!" There was no hope for S. Peter till the reproachful look of his Master showed him himself, and sent him out to weep bitterly. There

was no hope for S. Augustine till the day when he saw his foul and sinful life, and cried out in an agony of repentance. There is no hope for us who have read the story of the Prodigal over and over again unless God in His mercy opens our eyes to see our sins, and softens our hearts to repentance, and whispers in our ears—"Thou art the man! Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

SERMON XIII.

TURNING HOMEWARDS.

S. LUKE XV. 18.

"I will arise, and go to my Father."

THE Prodigal had eaten of the world's food, and he had come to the husks. He had drunk of the cup of worldly sin and pleasure, and from the midst of the sweetness there had come a bitter and a deadly flavour. It is ever thus that the world treats its slaves. We read how in the old days the cruel Duke of Alva starved his prisoners to death, after promising to spare their lives. "I promised you your lives," said he, "but I did not promise you meat." So the sinner, tempted by the promises of the world, sees what he calls *life*; but he pays the penalty by starving his soul to death. Sooner or later sin and disobedience, whether towards God our Heavenly Father or an earthly parent, bring want, misery, disgrace.

The Persians of old used, after a victory, to take

one of their slaves and make him a king for three days. He was clad in purple and fine linen, and his every wish was obeyed. But when the three days were over, he was stripped of his royal robes and offered as a sacrifice to mirth and folly.

Ah, my brothers, we may enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; it may seem very sweet to us to be our own masters, to have our own way, but then cometh the end. The play is played out—the poor sinner is no more his own master, no more a king. Like the Persian slave, he must pay the penalty. He has chosen the world, like the Cardinal who said, “ I prefer the honours of Paris to the pleasures of Paradise,” and the world strips him, and leaves him “ naked to his enemies.”

The first step in a Prodigal's progress towards repentance is to see his life and his sins in their true colours. At the theatre the scenery and the actors, as seen beneath the glare of the lime-light, appear very lovely. The stage looks like a fairy-land of beauty. But if you visit the same scene by clear daylight, you will find all changed. The lovely woods and glades which you saw flashing under the moonlight, are mere rough, coarse pictures now. The flowers which last night seemed to bloom so sweetly are mere paper and tinsel in

the daylight of to-day. The fair faces which looked so young and fascinating beneath the lime-light, are old, and withered, and ugly in the honest sunshine.

When we sin deliberately, we look at our life in a false light, and it seems for a time full of brightness and pleasure. If God in His mercy opens our eyes to see ourselves as we really are, we find how hollow, and false, and unsatisfactory that life is, for which we are sacrificing our soul.

The Prodigal saw the rags, the husks, the misery to which sin had brought him, but only after he had come to himself. "He learnt that he who would not accept the liberal treatment of a son, is obliged to be the bondservant of a foreign master; he who would not be ruled by God is compelled to serve the devil; he who would not abide in his father's house is sent into the fields among hinds; he who would not dwell with his brethren and equals, is obliged to be the companion of brutes; he who would not feed on the bread of angels begs in his hunger for the husks of the swine." (*Cornelius à Lapide.*)

The Prodigal discovered, when he came to himself, that he was starving. He had tried to feed on worldliness and selfish pleasure, and they did

not satisfy. So is it ever with the sinner. He thinks that if only he can have his own way, and walk in his own path, he will be satisfied. He fancies that if he is free to indulge all his fleshly lusts and passions he will be happy. But it is not so. The old heathen Romans in their worst days tried to find happiness in animal pleasures and gross sins. They had the richest food, the most gorgeous palaces, the most costly luxuries, but they were not happy. Of what use was a meal that cost a fortune to a man who had lost all appetite? or a soft couch to one who could not sleep? A man made in God's image cannot satisfy his longings by living like a beast; one who has tasted the food of men cannot exist upon the husks of swine. Truly it has been said, "None but God can satisfy the longings of an immortal soul; as the heart was made for Him, so He only can fill it."

The sins of the Prodigal brought him down to feed swine, and to desire even to eat their food. Sin ever drags down the sinner from all that is high and noble to all that is low and degraded. The Greek legend of old tells us how an enchantress turned all the guests at her banquet into beasts. Those who feast on the food of sinfulness are

transformed into something lower than a beast. Look at the drunkard, the blasphemer, the unclean man, and you will see scarce a trace of manliness in him ; you shrink from him as from a foul animal.

The Prodigal came to himself, and now he looked with horror on the past ; what had seemed so tempting was now hateful ; he shrank from the foul place in which he had lingered so long, and the evil company in which he had once delighted. He asks himself with wonder how he could ever have found pleasure in such society ; he is ready to cry with awakened Saul, "I have played the fool, and erred exceedingly ;" or with sorrowful Job, "Now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

My brethren, remember there is no true repentance unless we hate our old sins, and loathe what we once loved. If we profess to be sorry for the past, yet still secretly long after the flesh-pots of that Egypt where we feasted, or look back lovingly towards the Sodom where we sinned, we are not penitent, we do not want to forsake sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Repentance means a change of mind, so that we hate the evil which we once loved ; we shrink from the bad company in which we delighted ; we

go back to the God Whom we neglected; we turn from the cup of sinful pleasure as from poison.

Notice now each step in the Prodigal's return, for it is the model for every sinner who repents. The Prodigal does not remain sitting on the ground with the swine. He says to himself, "I have been too long sitting idly here among beasts, when I might have been walking with men. I have fallen very low; I am brought down even unto the ground. My feet stick fast in the deep mire. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, and in a place of darkness. But I will arise, and go to my father."

Yes, the sinner must *arise*, he must forsake his sin, he must turn away from the foul company, and the evil habit, if he would repent truly. It will not do for us to sit still in the old sinful spot, and cry over our misery. It will not do for us to remain with the swine and the filth of sin, and bewail that we are not clean. If we would be clean we must leave the dirty ways; we must *arise*. The Prodigal made up his mind at once. He did not hesitate as to what he should do; he did not try to join himself to yet another citizen of the far country, or to seek some other sin.

There was only one thing for him to do, and he did it.

So with every sinner. He must make up his mind to forsake his sin, and to turn towards his Heavenly Father against Whom he has sinned. He must not go anywhere else. He must not expect to find pardon and peace in anything which the world can give. He can find rest only with his Father and with his God. The Prodigal still spoke of his father, though he had sinned against him, and felt that he was no longer worthy to be called his son. Worthless, outcast, sinful, disobedient, as he had been, still he was a son, and he had a father.

So with us, my brethren. However much we have sinned, however deeply we may have wallowed in the swinish filth of wickedness, unworthy though we are to be called the sons of God, yet we *are* the sons of God. The merits of Jesus our Saviour have made us in our Baptism adopted children of God. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We may have offended against His holy laws, and wandered into the far country away from God, but we still have a Father and a Home. The Prodigal was not afraid to speak to his father by name. My brothers, let us not

fear to speak to our Father now. We come to Him as children—unruly, disobedient, wicked children, it may be. But still as children we can speak to God by that blessed name of love—our Father. The Prodigal made up his mind to confess all his sin to his father. He would not go to him with an excuse, like Adam; or a boast, like the Pharisee; or a half confession, like Saul; or a lie, like Ananias. He will acknowledge his faults, and his sin is ever before him. He will confess that he is no more worthy of the name of son, he will be content to take the lowest place in his father's house.

“O happy sinner,” says one of old, “keep watchfully and carefully this most just feeling of humility and devotion.” If we would be saved, if we would find pardon and peace, we must humble ourselves before God our Father. We must confess our sins, if we want God to forgive us the wickedness of our sins. So many of us are yet in their sins, unpardoned and unblest, because they are too blind to see their faults, or too proud to confess them to God. May God make us humble, and keep us humble. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” Notice that it was love for his father and his

name which led the Prodigal back. It was not merely that he was in want and misery. He might have sought other companions and other employment if he had still desired the far country. But the life he had been leading was hateful to him; his heart yearned towards his father and his old home.

So is it with us. We cannot repent and turn back to God of ourselves. God alone holds the key which can unlock a hard heart, fast closed against all right feelings. God alone can put into our minds good desires, and move us to repentance. He comes to us sometimes in the mighty rushing wind of some sudden calamity, or in the fire of some great trial, or in the earthquake which swallows up all our plans and schemings, or in the still small voice of conscience; but whenever a man makes up his mind to go home to God in repentance, it is in answer to God's call.

My brothers, has God never spoken to you in this way? Has no still, small voice whispered to you that you have sinned against your Father in Heaven, that you have wandered from the right way, that you have wasted God's precious gifts on sins and follies? Look into your lives now—see if they are what they ought to be, what they might

be, what God would have them to be. Ask yourselves the question—"What am I doing with my life, that life which comes from God, the Lord and Giver of life? Am I wasting that life which God gave, which Jesus my Saviour died to redeem, on mere worldly pleasure, worldly gain, and selfish sin? God my Father would have me to dwell in His Holy Family, the Church, as a dutiful and obedient son. Am I doing this, or have I gone as a prodigal into the far country of worldliness and sin? Have I joined myself to some citizen of the world, and forsaken my Heavenly Father?"

Brethren, if you are living only for this world, if you are living only to earn money, or only to eat and drink and indulge the lusts of the flesh, or only to follow your own will and pleasure, I tell you that you are prodigals dwelling among the swine, when you might be God's children living in your Father's House. If there be any such here to-day, may God call them, and give them ears to hear. May God show them themselves in their true state; may He Who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, turn the wayward and hardened hearts of every wanderer here, that he may make up his mind *now*, and say, "I will arise, and go to my Father."

SERMON XIV.

THE WELCOME HOME.

S. LUKE XV. 20.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion."

SOME years ago a young French soldier lay sick, and seemingly dying, in Geneva. He had left his home in Brittany to fight for his country, and his parents had waited and hoped for his return. Now the fatigues and hardships of war had laid him low, and he felt that he must die. His father was sent for, and with difficulty took the long journey to his son's sick-bed. Nothing could rouse the young soldier, and the food and delicacies sent by kind hands were untasted. "I am not hungry," was all he said.

Presently his father drew forth a coarse loaf of rye bread, such as is commonly eaten in Brittany, and gave it to the sick man, saying, "Take this, my son ; it was made by your mother." Eagerly

the young soldier received it, crying, "It is so good, so good—the bread from home." And from that time he began to recover.

My brethren, it is a sign of returning health when we long once more for the bread of home. The Prodigal came to himself, and turned with loathing from his former food. The sinner who comes to himself is sick of the world's wage and the taste of sin. He longs for the spiritual food of his Father's House, the sincere milk of the Word, and, above all, the Bread of Life in the Blessed Sacrament. He cries out, "Bread of Heaven, feed me now and evermore. It is so good, so good, that Bread from Home."

The Prodigal felt, as *we* all feel, that he was not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs which fell from his father's table, yet he did not fear to go home and ask to be fed.

Some people foolishly and ignorantly stay away from the Heavenly Food of the Altar, and starve their souls, saying they are not fit to draw near. Who is fit to draw near, except as a prodigal returning home, a sinner desiring pardon?

That ragged Prodigal, stained with filth and sin, was not worthy to draw near to his father's house. He knew this, but he did not stay to

think of worthiness. He trusted in his Father's love. He arose, and came to his father, acknowledging his wretchedness, confessing his sin, not daring so much as to lift up his eyes to Heaven.

So must it be with us. We must trust in our Father's love. We must not think that *perhaps* He will forgive us. We must be sure; we must believe His word. What the father did for the Prodigal, God, our Heavenly Father, will do for us.

"When he was yet a great way off he saw him." There is no eyesight so keen as that of a loving parent. True love never dies, never forgets. I have read of a father who loved his children dearly, but had the sorrow of seeing them one by one taken from him by death. As an old man, bent and bowed with many sorrows, he never forgot the bright faces and merry voices of the children who had left him. Night after night he used to put the same question to his aged wife—"Are the children safe at home?" and she, knowing that God had taken them to His keeping, would answer, "Yes, they are quite safe, *at home*." So, too, the old grandfather, in one of the most touching of modern stories, cannot realize that little Nell is dead, but keeps repeating, "She'll

come again to-morrow." The child may forget home and friends, but the love of father and mother never grows feeble, never forgets; and if the wanderer returns, the loving heart of the parent goes out to meet him—"When he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion on him."

God, our Heavenly Father, meets the penitent sinner half way. The faintest sigh of sorrow for our sin is heard by the ever-watchful ear of God. He hearkens to the sighing of the captives fast bound in the misery and iron of sin; He hears their cry, however weak and feeble it may be; and the Lord looseth men out of prison.

But remember, my brethren, God will only save us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins. We cannot keep our sins and have God's pardon also. We cannot live the life of the wicked and yet find the peace of the blessed. I have said that God will meet us half way, but we must have started to go back to Him. It was only after the Prodigal had arisen and gone to his father that the father met him half way, and had compassion on him. We must see our sins before we can be sorry for them, and we must be sorry for them before we can humbly confess them to God our Father. We must know that

we are foul and unclean, and desire earnestly to be cleansed, before God will say, "I will; be thou clean." The blind man was not healed till he had cried, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." God will work no miracle of cleansing and pardon unless we ask Him, believing and acknowledging our wretchedness. David had to pour out his heart in the agony of the fifty-first Psalm before he found pardon and peace. The Prodigal had to confess—"I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," before he was received once more into his father's favour.

Brethren, all we like sheep have gone astray, all we like the Prodigal have wandered from our Father's House. We have not, of course, all sinned in the same way or in the same degree, but we have all sinned—in thought, in word, in deed. Some of our sins are those of the body, some are those of the soul. Yes, we have all sinned over and over again, but we have not all repented. We have not arisen and gone to our Father; we have not sought Him through His Son our Saviour. We have not confessed our sins, and so God has not forgiven us the wickedness of our sins. Let our cry be now—"I have sinned against Heaven

and before Thee." Let us cast aside all those foolish thoughts about our being respectable, or no worse than our neighbours. Let us remember our faults this day, sins of long ago, hidden away in secret, sins known only to our God and ourselves. Let us recall the sins of selfishness and self-pleasing, of neglect or ignorance, and then confess them fully and freely to God our Father.

Some of us, I believe, have never really confessed their sins to God, sincerely and truly from the heart. Let us make a beginning now, let us return unto the Lord, and He will return to us ; let us arise and go to our Father, confessing our sins, and He will see us when we are yet a great way off, and have compassion.

Dear souls, for which Christ died on the Cross and rose again from the dead, what hinders you from finding pardon and peace even now ? what hinders you from making your resolution *now*—"I will arise and go to my Father ?"

Is it that you think that you have not sinned, and so need no repentance ? May God open our eyes to see ourselves as we really are ! Do you acknowledge that you have sinned, but yet think of your sin as a light and trifling matter ? Open your Gospel and read the story of your Saviour's

agony; and remember, sin—*your* sin, *my* sin—caused that. Is sin a trifle, when it forced the bloody sweat from the brow of Jesus? Is sin a trifle, when it caused the death of God's own Son upon the Tree? Look at the Prodigal—homeless, ragged, starving among the swine; look at the rich man, gazing in his hopeless agony across the great gulf fixed, and then ask yourselves if sin is a trifle in the sight of God.

The Prodigal went home deeply penitent, bowed down with shame for his sin, but never doubting that his father would receive him. He did not say to himself, "I dare not go home and ask forgiveness; I am afraid to meet my father[†]; I am ashamed to acknowledge my sin." He was ashamed of himself, but not ashamed to confess; and he had perfect faith in his father's love.

So should it be with us. We must believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has made us sons of God by adoption, and has opened a way of return for us when we have wandered into sin. Believing this, we must have perfect faith in God our Father's love; we must feel, "I *know* in Whom I have believed." We must realize that as a father pitieth his children, even so God will have compassion on us, and that, "if we confess

our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We must arise and go home, remembering those blessed words of comfort—"Whomsoever cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

There may be some of us here who are yet a great way off from God, who have only just thought of forsaking sin, and going home to their Father. They are weak and uncertain, but still they want to leave the old bad way, and come back to God and peace. God will meet you half way; He sees you now and has compassion, though you may be still a great way off.

Brethren, we are all of us too far off from God. Even those of us who pray, and read our Bibles, and come to Church, are in many ways very far off. We love ourselves so far better than we love God, we think of ourselves so much oftener than we think of our Saviour, we fail so frequently to follow the steps of His most holy life. There is not one of us who has not need to resolve now to arise, and go nearer to his Father in Heaven. There, close to our God, in our Father's House, alone shall we find safety, pardon, peace.

When, lately, a terrible flood swept away a

town in America, a sisterhood was living in a convent in the town. The Mother looked out of the windows, and saw the raging torrent sweeping down upon the doomed valley. Instantly she summoned the sisters to the convent chapel, and there they remained, praying to God, and believing that even in the great water-floods they could come nigh to Him. The flood swept over the convent, carrying it away like a house of cards, but the chapel was uninjured, and the praying sisters were saved. We alone are safe from the temptations and sins of this troublesome world as long as we are living at home, as God's children, in our Father's House.

" Bless us, O Christ, for we are sick and weary
With all life's sad unrest and hopeless sin,
Failure, and faded hopes, and pathway dreary,
And the long wear and fret without, within.

Grant us, in thirst and hunger for the holy,
To know that peace which this world cannot give;
To learn at length—though hardly learnt, and slowly—
That, dying every day, behold, we live."

SERMONS ON
General Subjects.

SERMON XV.

WORKING CHRISTIANS.

NEHEMIAH IV. 6.

“The people had a mind to work.”

It was in the sad days of the Captivity, when Israel for their sins were banished from their country, that a young Jew was dwelling in the Persian Court, holding a high and important position as cupbearer to the great king Artaxerxes. This was Nehemiah. Though honoured and respected at Court, and by right of his office freely admitted to the presence of the king and queen, Nehemiah's thoughts often turned towards the land of his fathers.

Persia was a fair land, and a rich, but it was not home. Nehemiah would gladly have exchanged the luxurious living of the Persian Court for the simplest meal beneath the vines and fig trees of Judæa, and the softest couch and richest carpet in Shushan for one of the

wild hills that stand round about Jerusalem.

One day, as Nehemiah wandered outside the royal city, he saw a band of strangers, and heard them speak to each other in his beloved Hebrew tongue. He found that they were from Judæa, and to his eager questions they answered that enemies had overthrown the walls of Jerusalem, and burned the gates with fire, and how the people who remained were in sad case.

Terrible was this news to the brave and patriotic Nehemiah. It was no time for him to be enjoying the splendour of a Court, whilst the city of his fathers' sepulchres was being laid waste, and its ruined walls affording an opening to any foe.

He must have looked back sadly to the days gone by, when Sion was the joy of the whole earth ; when peace was upon her palaces, and her walls were called Salvation ; when David ruled in the city of the great king, and Solomon reigned in all his glory. Now the enemy had made Jerusalem a heap of stones, and given the flesh of her children to be meat for the fowls of the air.

So the time passed, and Artaxerxes the king noticed that the once cheerful face of his young cupbearer was heavy and sad, and that day by day his sorrow deepened. At last he asked him the

reason of his sadness, and what request he would make.

Then Nehemiah, before answering the king, prayed to the God of Heaven. Here is the first striking lesson for us to learn from the splendid example of Nehemiah. He always put prayer first. In this great crisis of his life, he prayed for direction before he answered. In his subsequent labours prayer came first, then sturdy, faithful work.

Nehemiah put the matter in God's hands, and then asked Artaxerxes to permit him to visit Judah and the city of his fathers' sepulchres, that he might rebuild them. When his request was granted, and Nehemiah and his followers reached Jerusalem, they met with many difficulties. The streets of the city were choked with rubbish and ruined masonry; many enemies watched the work of rebuilding with jealousy, and tried to hinder it by insult or positive opposition.

Sanballat, and Tobiah the Ammonite, openly sneered at these "feeble Jews," as they called them; but these feeble Jews were strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. They prayed unto the God of Heaven; the praises of God were in their mouth, and a two-edged sword

by their side. The people were eager to help on the building, like the Greeks repairing the walls of Athens after the attack of Xerxes, or the Scots rebuilding the walls of Edinburgh after the fatal day on Flodden Field.

There were two reasons for Nehemiah's success. First, he did all in a spirit of prayer ; next, " the people had a mind to work. So they builded the wall."

My brethren, where earnest prayer and faithful work go hand in hand, success must follow.

The story of Nehemiah, and the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, supplies several plain lessons for us. Our Jerusalem, the city of our fathers' sepulchres, is the Holy Church throughout all the world. We of the Church are a holy family. Children of the great King, we dwell among our own people in the spiritual Jerusalem ; there our fathers, who died in the Catholic faith, lie sleeping in their hallowed sepulchres ; we are citizens of no mean city.

As there were enemies who attacked Jerusalem of old, so there have ever been enemies who fight against the Church, who try to break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers ; who would, if they had the power, make our Holy

Temple a heap of stones. Political robbers try to break down the walls of our Church, and strip her of her property. Unbelievers lay siege to us, and block up the Church with rubbish, doubts, speculations, new views—rubbish generally.

Men like Sanballat, and Tobiah the Ammonite, sneer at us, and ridicule our work. Many a weak brother has been sneered and laughed out of his religion, for some men would face a cannon rather than ridicule. “Look at these feeble Christians,” say the sneerers; “what can they build? Do they think their old Bible can stand against our brand new science? Do they expect clever people like us to believe in miracles, or the resurrection? Their Church is made up of superstitions; let us pull down the walls, and stop their building.”

Well, Sanballat and his friends talked very much in this way, but still the work went on—“So they builded the wall.” What was the reason? They trusted in their leader, Nehemiah, they prayed to the God of Heaven, and “the people had a mind to work.” Though enemies and traitors were doing their best to hinder them, the work went on, and their leader encouraged them thus—“Be ye not afraid of them; remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for

your brethren, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your houses.”

We, like those followers of Nehemiah, are all called to do a great work, to build up, day by day, the Holy Church to which we belong, to build up ourselves and each other in the true faith, to repair the damage which enemies make, to clear away the rubbish which accumulates.

“The people had a mind to work.” Happy is the parish, happy is the congregation, where the people have a mind to work. Let no man say it is no business of his. Nehemiah might have said that, but he felt he could not rest while the city of his fathers’ sepulchres needed protection and repair. Our holy city—the Church—is attacked on all sides, from without and within. The world, the flesh, and the devil are encamped against it, and if our walls are allowed to get out of repair, if there are weak places in our defences, our faith, our practice, our example, the foe will find them out. Then there are false friends, unworthy Christians, treacherous brethren, within our walls, who are most dangerous of all.

As Nehemiah and his followers built up the city of their fathers, so should we daily build up the Holy Church of our God, of our brethren, and of

our ancestors. This means *work*. What we need is *working Christians*, working Churchmen. There is no room, no use, for merely ornamental Christians. There is no use for frivolous folks, who go to Church merely as a Sunday parade, to display their fine clothes, to carry a gorgeous Prayer Book, and to criticise their neighbours. Such people, who are quite ignorant about the doctrines they profess, and quite indifferent about them, are worse than useless. We want people who have a mind to *work*; who know what they believe, and *why* they believe, and are ready and willing to do *something*—what they can—for the honour of the Church of their fathers, and the Altar of their God. There is not a man, woman, or child among the baptized members of the Holy Church but has a work to do for Christ, and the power of doing it, if *he has a mind to work*.

The work is the same for all—the building up the living Church in the true faith, to the glory of God—but it is done in many different ways. There is *praying* work, *fighting* work, *watching* work, *warning* work. In all these different ways of working, Nehemiah sets us an example. He was a *prayerful worker*. Whatever he took in hand, he laid the matter before the Lord. So

must it be with us ; from the smallest thing to the greatest let us ask God's help, God's guidance in the matter.

Brethren, we want Christians who *work at their prayers*. A poor man once complained to his parish priest that he never succeeded. "I work hard," said he, "I live hard, and yet I cannot thrive." "I will tell you what you need," was the answer, "work hard, and fare hard, and *pray hard*, then you will thrive." There are plenty of hard-working men amongst us who are neither prosperous, nor happy, nor contented. It is just because they do not pray hard. A man cannot satisfy his soul's wants with work alone. "Unless the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it."

There is in the great Church of S. Peter, at Rome, a doorway, called the *Porta Santa*, which is walled up, and marked with a cross. On Christmas Eve, once in twenty-five years, this door is opened with solemn state, in the presence of the Pope and Cardinals. When the door is opened, the people pass into the Cathedral by a way which they have never trod before, and which most of them will never tread again. The door of prayer is always open, unlike the *Porta Santa*, and

we can at any moment go by it to the throne of grace. It is this fact which makes some of us undervalue prayer; we are careless about using the door, which ever stands open; just because we can go to God at any time with our prayer, some of us neglect to go at all, or only draw near in a half-hearted, indifferent manner. A heartless, thoughtless prayer, is like an arrow shot from a loose string, it will drop useless to the ground; but a prayer that is prayed with our might, and from our very heart of hearts, is as the arrow shot from the tightly-drawn bowstring, it flies far, and reaches the mark.

The philosopher of old said he could move the world with his lever, if he only had a place to rest it on. Each one of you has in prayer a mighty power which can do all things; it can build up the walls of a Church, and the hearts of the people, and the faith of the world. God grant that the people of this place may have a mind to work at their prayers!

Then there is much *fighting work* for God's people to do. If we are trying to do our duty, to help in building up the Holy Church of Christ, there will be enemies to hinder us, like Sanballat and Tobiah. As Christians we are men of peace,

but not peace at any price, not disgraceful peace. We must ever wage war with sin, with falsehood, with error. The man who never speaks a word, or strikes a blow for the honour of his Master, and his Master's House, is a coward who has turned himself back in the day of battle. Such people are like the man of whom his child said that he was a Christian, but was not *working* much at it just then.

Ah, my brothers, so many Christian soldiers seem to have retired from active service, and given up work. May we be among those who have a mind to work, and to fight the good fight of the faith.

Then, lastly, there is *watching and warning work*. By the side of Nehemiah stood a trumpeter, and when he blew his warning blast, it told the people of danger, and bade them rally round their leader. We as Christians should help each other. If you see a brother in danger, give him a trumpet-call of warning. If you see a neighbour going downhill to ruin by the road of drunkenness, or swearing, or Sabbath breaking, or gambling, or what not, sound the trumpet, give him a warning, say a friendly word, stretch out a helping hand. Thus, and thus only shall we build up the Church, and conquer every foe, when all the people have a mind to work.

SERMON XVI.

CALLED CHRISTIANS.

ACTS XI. 26.

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

A MARTYR for the faith of Jesus was once asked, “What is your name?” His only answer was, “I am a Christian.” He was asked, “What is your occupation?” Still he answered, “I am a Christian.” We all bear that most holy, most glorious of names, and it behoves us to take care that, in all we say and do, men may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus—may be able to say truly that we are Christians.

That name of Christian was first given to the followers of the Gospel in scorn and ridicule. As Pilate placed the title over the Head of the crucified Jesus in mockery, and—without meaning it—told the truth, so the enemies of Christ called His disciples by a name which, meant as an insult, became a title of honour and glory. The name

which is honoured and respected throughout the world, was at first used to mark all that was vile and wicked. To be a Christian meant, in the eyes of the heathen, to be a companion of the worst characters, who were supposed to practise horrible rites in secret, and to be stained with every kind of vice. Thus early did the followers of Christ learn to bear reproach for His name's sake.

On the walls of those old-world cities men painted coarse pictures, ridiculing and caricaturing Jesus and His disciples, and some of these have been discovered in our own day. No doubt many a wall in ancient Antioch was thus marked by those who first, in contempt and insult, called the disciples *Christians*.

That city of Antioch, where the name which we all bear was first given, was a rich, powerful, and beautiful city, built at an angle formed by Syria and Asia Minor—where the river Orontes flows between the mountain ranges of Lebanon and Taurus. The wealth, the merchandise, the arts of both Greece and Rome were found in Antioch. It was the gate of the East, as was Constantinople in later days.

Antioch, too, was wicked as it was fair; it was

a centre of selfish indolence and luxurious vice. Wealthy Romans sought its delicious climate, and their villas and gardens gradually grew and multiplied along the banks of Orontes. Chiefly, however, Antioch was peopled by a mixed multitude of Greeks and Oriental followers, who spent their time in visiting the theatre, attending races, listening with superstitious fear to astrologers and other impostors, and making their religion "a perpetual festival of vice." No cities of old time were so bad as the Greek cities under the Roman Empire, and none were worse than Antioch.

We can scarcely imagine what the religion of the Gospel—of the meek Jesus—appeared like to the inhabitants of that fair and wicked city. It was opposed in every way to the habits and customs of the day. What would those selfish Greeks think of being taught to love their neighbour as themselves, and to esteem every man better than themselves? How could the wealthy, who spent all upon their own pleasures and vices, receive a Gospel which told them to sell all, and give to the poor, and lay up treasure in Heaven; which assured them that it is better to give than to receive? What would those cruel crowds, who delighted in the theatre, and loved to see men

hack each other to pieces, or struggle with wild beasts, think of a religion which bid them love one another, be gentle, and kindly affectionate one to another, which actually expected them to call a poor miserable slave a brother ?

So in their hatred and contempt for such doctrine, the people of Antioch invented the name of "Christian," thinking they could not call the disciples by any worse name. Yet that name is now the watchword of the world. Spoken against, despised, laughed to scorn, it may be now by some, even as it was in Antioch of old—but it wins the victory at last, even as the motto, "*Jesus conquers*," still remains, and remains a truth on the top of S. Sophia, after ages of Mohammedan dominion.

The great Christian Emperor found strength in the vision of the Cross, and the promise, "*In this sign shalt thou conquer !*" All the faithful have found the same strength to have victory by looking unto Christ crucified ; those who have fought against God have found that it is true that Jesus conquers, even as the apostate Emperor Julian found, when he received his fatal wound, and died shrieking, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean !"

And now let us think of ourselves. We are all called Christians. What does the name mean to *us*; what manner of life ought ours to be, who bear the name of disciples of Christ Jesus, the Anointed Saviour? First, we must remember how we get that name of Christian; it is by no act of our own, but by the gift of God. It is our birthright, given to us in Baptism. When we are born into the world we are not Christians, not members of Christ's Holy Church, or inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Holy Baptism we are born again of water and the Holy Ghost, we are born into God's family—the Church, we are made members of Christ—Christians.

The old fable tells us how Prometheus made a statue of Minerva, so beautiful that the goddess offered to bring from Heaven anything which could add to its charm. Prometheus asked permission to go and choose for himself, and he brought down fire, which gave the one thing wanting to the statue—*life*.

All life comes from Heaven, and in our Baptism God the Holy Spirit comes to us and gives us life, the life of the soul. Since, then, we become Christians in our Baptism when we are born again, and grafted into the body of Christ's

Church, we ought always to remember what a solemn vow, promise, and profession we have taken upon us, and that we are pledged to lead the rest of our life according to that beginning; as we began with God, so must we continue. We have been admitted into God's family as adopted sons, but we may prove to be prodigals—Esau, who barter away our birthright. We were grafted into the body of Christ's Church, but the shoot grafted into a good tree may wither away and die.

So we, if we neglect the gift of the Spirit, if we seek no nourishment from God's grace, shall soon have no life in us. We were pledged to be Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to our life's end. But we may prove unfaithful servants, cowardly soldiers. We sometimes see a man, well-born, well-educated, falling into evil ways and evil company, and going headlong to ruin. If we ask is such an one a *gentleman*, the true answer is—"Yes; he is a gentleman by birth and by education, but he is unworthy the name because he is neither gentle, nor honest, nor upright." So it may be asked of someone—"Is he a Christian?" And the right answer is—"He is a Christian inasmuch as he was baptized, and received the name of God's child, and became entitled to all the privileges and

blessings bought by the Blood of Christ." But if he is leading an inconsistent life, if he is *not* proceeding in all virtuous and godly living, then he is disgracing his name, he is dragging his white robe in the mire, he is sinning against light, against reason, he is a deserter from the army of the Lord, he is a curse and a stumbling-block to his fellow-men.

My brothers, we are called Christians; are our lives in keeping with our name; are we trying to show forth our faith not only with our lips but in our lives; are we striving to follow in the steps of Christ's holy example? As Christians, we must be consistent in all we do or say; we must try to show Whose servants we are.

A certain foolish man of old dressed himself like a philosopher, and stood before a king. When the king was weary of his silly talk, the man said, "Do you not see that I am a philosopher?" And the king answered, "I see the dress, but not the philosopher." So when we see men professing and calling themselves Christians, yet following the multitude to do evil, we are obliged to say, "We see the dress, but not the Christian."

Brethren, try to remember what is meant by that name *Christian*. It means one redeemed by

the precious Blood of God's own Son. What manner of life ought ours to be, since Christ has bought it with His Blood ?

Once, at a slave sale in the Southern States of America, a young slave girl attracted the notice of a good man by her tears. She had been kindly brought up by her late owner, and now she feared that she might fall into the hands of some cruel master. The stranger, touched by her sorrow, paid the purchase money, and told the girl that she was free.

The young girl, who had been born a slave, understood not what freedom meant. The friend who had paid her ransom prepared to depart, first telling the girl what she must do when he was gone. Then she began to understand what freedom meant, and she cried out, "I will follow him ; I will serve him all my days." To those who tried to dissuade her she had but one answer, "He redeemed me—he redeemed me."

Nothing would keep the girl from serving the man who had set her free, and when his guests wondered at the untiring service given without wage or reward, her answer was ever the same, "He redeemed me—he redeemed me."

Brothers, does the world see in *our* lives, in our faithful service, that we are followers of the Lord

Jesus, and that we can say with truth, "I serve Him because He redeemed me—He redeemed me."

I know nothing more shameful, more sad, more ruinous to souls, than the sight of a professing Christian who is leading a careless or wicked life. The so-called Christians who cheat, who adulterate, who over-reach, who lie, who speak evil of their neighbour, who quarrel with their friends and refuse to be reconciled, who take care of themselves and leave others to want, who are selfish and gluttonous, whilst Lazarus the beggar starves at their gates, and who do all this within the sound of Church bells, and go regularly to service, and use their Bibles and Prayer Books and hymnals—these are the people who ruin souls, who bring religion into disrepute, who make men into atheists and doubters.

"By their fruits ye shall know them." If we are Christians truly, we shall try to show it in our lives. Once a widow lady employed a man to do the repairs and paint the inside of her house. She chose this particular man because he had a great character for piety; he took a leading part in religious circles, and his "*Amen*" in Church was very loud. When, however, the lady discovered that the man only put one coat

of paint where he should have put two, and none at all where he thought it would not be noticed, she saw the man's religion was not of the true kind; it did not penetrate into his work.

Brethren, you are called Christians; are you trying to live worthy of the name? Do you remember, in all your business transactions, when you till your farm, or buy your cattle, or open your office or shop, "I am called a Christian; I must in *all* things act as Christ's faithful servant?"

Round the Church of S. Giacomo de Rialto, at Venice, there is this inscription, "Around this Temple let the merchants' law be just, his weights true, his covenants faithful." Such should be the law of every Christian man. What if some of us have been trusting for years to being *called* Christians, without ever having *lived* as Christians! What if we have been sailing under false colours, claiming to be Christ's followers, when our acts and words show that we are none of His! Let us look deep down into the secret places of our hearts; let us ask God to show us ourselves as we really are; let us ask ourselves the question, "I am *called* a Christian, but do I *live* as a Christian; is it that I have a name that I am alive, and yet I am dead—dead in trespasses and sins?"

SERMON XVII.

THE OTHER SIDE.

S. JOHN VI. 25.

“When they had found Him on the other side of the sea.”

No thoughtful man can stand by the seaside and listen to the different voices of the ocean unmoved. He will hear God speaking to him from the deep, and he will answer like the child Samuel—“Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.” As he gazes over the vast expanse of water, and watches it now calm and sparkling in the sun, anon dark with tempest and terrible in its rage, he learns the power of Almighty God and the feebleness of man, even the strongest or the wisest of men. Then to a thoughtful man the ocean is a sea of memories. Think what wonderful histories are buried beneath the waves—what gallant ships, what gallant hearts, what costly treasures, what mysterious crimes!

We look on one sea, and there comes to us the memory of Salamis and of the Persian flying before

the ships of Greece; or our thoughts go back to the final fight at Actium, which made Cæsar master of the world. We look on seas nearer home, and are reminded of many a stirring scene in our "rough island's story." We think of the fierce Danish sea-kings threatening our coasts beneath the terrible banner of the Black Raven. Roman legions, Saxon warriors, peaceful monks, Norman invaders pass before us as we read the story of the sea. We seem to look on the gallant men who sailed forth from Plymouth Sound to crush the pride and cruelty of the Spaniard, and we recall the heroes of the sea who fought and conquered in "the spacious times of great Elizabeth."

Memories of Nelson, the loving, lion-hearted leader, dying in the moment of victory, of Grace Darling risking her life for the sake of those in peril on the sea, and of many another brave and tender man and woman who lived and died for duty, must fill the heart of an Englishman as he listens to the story of the sea.

But there is one inland sea, far away from here, girdled in by steep hills, which is connected with the holiest, the tenderest, the sweetest of recollections—it is the Sea of Galilee. The traveller who looks upon the bright waters of that sea, or inland

lake, now almost deserted, recalls the days of the Gospel story, when fleets of fishing boats sailed there, and such men as S. Peter and S. John, and many another, cast their nets for the fish which to this day abound. He remembers when the shores of the lake, now marked by many a ruin, were dotted with flourishing towns—towns over which the Lord Jesus spoke that terrible sentence, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida,” and which have now utterly passed away.

Every part of the Sea of Galilee and its surroundings are like a living leaf from the Gospels, a living picture of the days “when Jesus was here among men!” It was here that the disciples had the miraculous draught of fishes, and were told by the Lord that they should become fishers of men. It was here that S. Matthew sat at the receipt of custom, and took toll of the passengers and merchandise ferried across the sea, then the highway from Syria to Europe.

At one point we can see the country of the Gadarenes, and the spot where the five thousand were fed by a miracle. On one of those sloping hills, leading to the sea-shore, and thickly covered in the spring-time with flowers, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. The calm, peaceful

shores of the sea, shadowed by the everlasting hills, were a fitting scene for the preaching of the Gospel of peace and goodwill towards men.

This Sea of Galilee was the scene of the incident of my text. Jesus had fed the five thousand with five barley loaves and a few small fishes, and having sent the multitude away, He retired into a mountain and prayed, remaining in prayer when the night had fallen. His disciples, meantime, were crossing the Sea of Galilee in their boat, and a sudden storm arose, and they were in peril. Suddenly Jesus—the Lord of sea and earth alike—appeared, walking on the water, and when He had entered the boat, the danger ceased, “immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.” Here let us learn the first lesson from this scene. What the disciples found so difficult, perhaps impossible to do, Jesus did for them at once. They toiled in rowing, but they were far from the shore. When Jesus was with them, immediately they were at the land whither they went!

Many a one is weary and sad, struggling with the temptations of this troublesome world, seeking rest and finding none. He is trusting too much to himself, thinking that he is strong

enough, unaided, to cross the waves of this troublesome world. Let such an one ask the Lord Jesus to help him; He will show the toiler that His grace is sufficient for him; He will cry to him, "Come unto Me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" so He brings him to the haven where he would be.

Learn another lesson from this Gospel story. Some of the people, who had eaten of the food miraculously provided, sought for Jesus, wishing to make Him a King. They sought Him, however, not because He was the Son of God, the Holy One, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, but because He could feed people without the need of their labouring. They thought of their bodies, not of their souls; they sought the Lord because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled. Jesus rebuked them, and told them not to take such pains to labour about food which perishes, but to be anxious about food which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man gives. Here is a warning to many of us. These people were ready to honour Jesus as a King because He filled them with earthly food; they sought Him not that He might rule in their

hearts, and be the King and the Saviour of their souls.

There are many people amongst us who profess religion only for what they can get. They are willing to call Jesus their King if He fills their bodies with good things. If God gives them worldly prosperity, if He fills their barns and their purses, if He gives them health, they are content to call Him their King. But when the Lord bids them worship Him in spirit and in truth, when He tells them that blessed are they who hunger and thirst after *righteousness*, when He bids them deny themselves and take up their cross, then they go back and follow no more after Him; they cry, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." A mere selfish religion of loaves and fishes is worthless. We see people crowd to a religious service on the occasion of some tea meeting, or when money or food are given away; but when the Bread of Life is offered on the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, when the gracious invitation is given, "Take, eat, this is My Body," these people turn away, and care not to look upon God. To all such the Lord utters the rebuke—"Verily, verily, ye sought Me because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat that perisheth,

but that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

There is yet another kind of lesson to be learnt from the fact that the people found Jesus on the other side of the sea. I learn from it that it is often necessary for us to cross over to *the other side* if we want to find the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes a man finds it necessary to leave the old way of life, his old acquaintances, his old associations, and emigrate into a new land; he goes to seek his fortune on the other side of the sea.

There are two sides to everything—the right side and the wrong, and some of us are living on the wrong side of life. There is nothing for us to do but to emigrate, to quit the old life, the old company, and to begin afresh on the other side.

Between the impenitent sinner and the Lord Jesus there is a great gulf fixed—there is the dark sea of unrepented and unforgiven sin. The Lord is ready and willing to save to the uttermost, but the sinner must *turn* to Him and be saved; He must seek Jesus on the other side of that sea of sin. As long as we abide in our sin, there lies the great gulf between us and peace, between us and Jesus. With some it is an open evil life which separates them from their Saviour and

from pardon. They are on the wrong side.

If you have stood on the rocks and watched the tide coming in on the beach of the sea, you will have seen that it seems to come very gradually—a little stream running here, a tiny wave gliding there—but presently, if you have not taken good heed, you will find yourself cut off from the shore, and a wide stretch of sea rolling between you and safety.

It is the same with sin. At first the temptation to evil seems a mere trifle; “Is it not a little one?” we say with indifference. But unless we escape, the tide of evil comes in faster and faster, deeper and deeper—we are cut off from happiness, from peace of mind, from Jesus.

Let us ask ourselves what it is which keeps us back from that peace which the world cannot give; what it is which lies like the sea between us and Jesus Christ our Lord. With one it is a *cruel, revengeful spirit*, which makes him think and speak hardly of his neighbour. With another it is the deep, all-absorbing sea of selfishness, which takes in all, and gives nothing back. This man is parted from Jesus by the sea of *worldliness*, whose waves seem to have gone even over his soul. His money, his pleasure, his ease, his friends,

fill up all his thoughts, till there is no room for God, no time to think of his soul. His prayers are neglected, his Bible is unread, the deep waters of worldliness roll between him and salvation—between him and Jesus.

Some of us let our domestic affairs come between us and Christ; some have made their work, which ought to be done as unto the Lord, a barrier betwixt them and their Master, Jesus. Whatever it is that keeps us apart from Him in Whom alone we can find rest and pardon, let us make up our minds that, by God's grace, we will cross over to the other side. Let us determine to quit the bad life, the bad company, the bad example, the bad talk, and to turn over a new page in our life's story, and make a new departure in life's journey, to cross over by repentance from the wrong side, and to find Jesus on the other side, praying always, "Make me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me."

Lastly, there is the comforting thought for all those who are trying to live a godly and a Christian life, that after we have passed from this life, and crossed the sea of death, we shall find Jesus *on the other side*.

Yes, there are two sides to our life. Here, on

this side, there are trouble, sorrow, loss, temptation, sickness, death. There, on the other side, all tears are wiped from off all faces; they hunger no more, neither thirst any more; there is no more pain, nor darkness, nor doubt, for Jesus is the Light thereof.

Dear brethren, some of us find the life on this side a hard one, the battle with sin and temptation is very fierce, the struggle to keep on the narrow way is very severe, the upward climb is very steep, but "there remaineth a rest for the people of God" *on the other side.*

Those of us who are growing old, whose lamp of life grows daily more dim, who have seen those near and dear to them pass away, turn their thoughts most frequently away from this life *to the other side.*

"The city's golden spire it was,
When hope and strength were strongest;
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest."

Some of us have had bitter disappointments, cruel wrongs, heavy burdens; every path on this side is wet with tears and marked with graves, but let us take comfort. If we have loved Jesus here, and worshipped Him in spirit and in truth,

for us all wrongs will be righted, all disappointments made up for, in that glory which shall be revealed in us, when we shall see the smiling faces of those “we loved long since and lost awhile;” above all, when we shall see Jesus face to face—
on the other side.

SERMON XVIII.

REST IN THE LORD.

EXODUS XXXIII. 14.

“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

SUCH was God's promise to Moses amid the lonely crags of Mount Sinai. The patient leader of Israel felt the burden laid upon him greater than he could bear. The people were stiff-necked, disobedient, and wilful, and they had added to their sins by making a calf in Horeb, and worshipping the golden image. Moses felt his weakness, and his inability to lead such a people alone. Then God assured him that he should not be alone, but that the Almighty would be present with him, and would give him rest.

If we have to take a long and difficult journey through an unknown country, where many dangers and trials await us, the feeling that we must go alone adds greatly to our troubles. But if a tried and trusted friend agrees to accompany us, one

on whose judgment we can rely, half the difficulty seems removed.

It is so with our journey through life. Like Moses we are in the wilderness, and the Promised Land is yet far off. There are dangers, difficulties, trials, enemies, around us. We feel that alone the journey would be too great for us, we should faint by the way; then comes this comforting promise of God—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. I am with thee alway, even unto the end of the world. Be strong and of a good courage, and the Lord He it is that doth go before thee. My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." God is our companion and guide; He leads us, His people, as He led Israel of old; He is not an absent God dwelling afar off, but a present God, a Leader, a Friend, Emmanuel—God *with us*.

This, then, is God's promise to His people—(1) He will be present with us; (2) He will give us rest.

It is said that when a saint of old time was martyred by a Roman Emperor, and his heart laid bare by his cruel persecutors, they found the name of Jesus written there upon his heart. All who love the Lord Jesus in truth carry His name

upon their hearts. He is in all their thoughts, ever present with them.

As Israel of old looked in the day-time and saw the pillar of cloud, and at night watched the pillar of fire, and knew that God was in the midst of them—so the Christian to-day knows that God is present with him, that He is in His holy Church, directing and leading it to the good Land of Paradise.

The Israelites turned their eyes towards the Tabernacle, and saw that God was present there in His Sanctuary. We turn our eyes towards God's House, the Church, and we know that He is present there. Let this thought make us ever reverent in Church; it is the Palace of the great King, the Presence Chamber of the Almighty God. Keep that fact always before you, my brethren, and you will never behave in God's House otherwise than reverently and decently.

If the Queen of England invited you to her palace you would prepare yourself very carefully for the visit—your dress, your behaviour, your attitude, all would be attended to. Shall we give God Almighty, King of kings and Lord of lords, less reverence and honour than an earthly

Sovereign? Let us rather *prepare* ourselves before we enter God's House.

We should not be late at an interview with the Queen, why should we be late in coming into God's presence in Church? It is just as easy to be punctual in Church as it is to be in time for a train; and it is an act of irreverence to Almighty God to be habitually late in entering His Holy Temple. Try to get this thought fixed in your minds—that the one great reason for Church-going is to worship and glorify God *present* there. People sometimes speak to me as if they went to Church to see the clergyman. Such people neglect Church-going on the plea that they do not care for the preacher or the style of service.

Try to put these unworthy thoughts away. Our one principal object in going to Church is to kneel down before the Lord our Maker, to honour God, Who is in His Holy Temple. Let everyone connected with the Church—those who clean its fabric, those who ring its bells—remember that God is ever present there, and that anything like noise or irreverence is utterly out of place before the face of the all-pure and all-holy God. Everything in the Church reminds us of the fact that God is present with us. We look at the

font, and see a babe brought to Holy Baptism. There, with the eye of faith, we see Jesus taking the child in His arms as He did of old ; we hear Him saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." We know that He has given His promise to that newly-baptized little one—"My presence shall go with thee."

Again, we see people brought to Church to the Bishop, to be confirmed by him. We see young people just beginning the battle of life, just leaving home for the hard journey across the wilderness ; we see parents trembling for the future of their children among all the changes and chances of the world, and there comes the blessed assurance, "Surely God is in this place ; this is none other than the gate of Heaven." As we look on the solemn gift given by the laying on of hands, we seem to hear God speaking to each young soldier, and saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee ; My presence shall go with thee."

Again, when we draw near to the Altar, the Holy of Holies, everything reminds us of God's Presence. The hushed silence, the reverent gestures, the shrinking away of those who are afraid to look upon God, all tell us that God is

present there, veiled beneath the Sacramental Bread and Wine, as He was veiled of old in the pillar of cloud and fire. Each devout communicant carries away with him from the Altar the gracious promise, "My presence shall go with thee."

If we look on a man and woman coming to God's Altar to be united in Holy Matrimony, we see that Jesus is present there, even as He was at the marriage feast of Cana, blessing and adorning the wedding with His sacred Presence, making the union what a marriage without religion *cannot* make it—holy.

When we come to the last scene of all, and our departed brother is brought for the last time to the Church where he has worshipped so long, we feel that God has fulfilled His promise, and that His presence has been a guide and comfort to our brother through the valley of the shadow, and that he has found rest.

Every time we kneel down and pray from our heart God is present with us. I don't mean when we kneel without thought and *say* our prayers, scarcely knowing whether we have said them or what we have said. When our *heart* is in our prayers, then the promise comes—"My presence shall go with thee."

When we read our Bible lovingly and earnestly, not as a task or a form, God is present with us. He speaks to us out of the pages of His own Book, and we can answer, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

But God not only promises that His presence shall be with His people, but that He will give them *rest*. Few words are oftener on men's lips than that word rest. It is the universal want. One cry goes up all over the world—give us rest. I am not thinking now of bodily rest, though that is God's gift, and one of His chiefest blessings.

The rest of which the text tells us is rest of mind, rest of soul—the peace of God which passeth all understanding. God alone can give us this rest, that peace which the world cannot give. There is no peace, saith my God, for the wicked. God alone can give us rest from the stings of an *accusing conscience*. Some men try to laugh down the voice of conscience, others to drown its whisper in strong drink; but the voice speaks on, and they have no rest. In the night-time when all the world sleeps, the man who is not at peace with God lies awake, listening to his conscience. The room seems full of phantoms and of voices. The man's past life lies before

him, and his thoughts trouble him. His neglected prayers, his unread Bible, his wasted opportunities, secret sins which he thought buried and forgotten, all these come before him like a terrible hand-writing on the wall.

My brothers, is there so such hand-writing on the wall of your home? Are there no times when your thoughts trouble you, when you are alone with conscience? Careless, thoughtless, worldly man, look up and read the hand-writing on the wall—*prepare to meet thy God*. Young man, walking in your own way, in the lusts of the flesh, scorning advice, loving the company of the vicious, pause, and look up at the hand-writing on the wall—*the soul that sinneth it shall die. Thou God seest me*. Ever before us is the terrible hand-writing, on the wall of our pleasure house, on the wall of our business house—*it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this the judgment*.

There is only one escape from these troubling thoughts and from the reproaches of our conscience. Some seek it in suicide, or strong drink, and they seek in vain. God alone can give us rest. Jesus alone can say, "Come unto Me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If we repent truly of our sins, if we

strive by God's grace to amend our lives in the future, the dark past shall be forgotten, the accusing voices shall be still, we shall in Jesus find pardon and peace.

If there be one here now whose thoughts trouble him, who knows that he is not at rest, at peace with God, may he be moved to-night to true repentance; may he, before he lies down to sleep, find his way to the feet of his Saviour, and tell Him all the sad story of his sins, and so find pardon and peace; may he hear God's voice to-night saying to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee; My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

Again, some amongst us want rest from *sorrow*.

There are widowed homes, and empty cradles, and new made graves amongst us. There are mothers who cannot forget the touch of the vanished hand, or the sound of that little voice which made the music of her life, and which is still for ever. The sympathy of friends cannot give her peace; their well meant words cannot give rest to that troubled heart: it is only on the loving breast of Jesus that the poor sorrowful one can sob itself to sleep, and find the peace that passeth all understanding.

Once more, we all want rest in time of care and anxiety. I do not say rest *from* care, for it must needs be that troubles come to us—"Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards;" but we need rest, patience, comfort, in bearing them, and this God alone can give us. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee."

We cannot help having anxieties about our children, our health, our property, and the many difficulties which beset us in the battle of life. These anxieties, however, need not make our life sad, our hair white, our home miserable. If we trust God we shall not fear what to-morrow will bring us. If the Lord is on our side we shall not fear what man can do unto us. We shall feel certain that God will strengthen our back for the burden, and brace our arm for the fight.

A hero of old, on hearing that an enemy was coming to attack him with twice as many men as his own, answered, "Then we shall beat so many the more." Put your whole trust and confidence in the Lord, and nothing can harm you. Even in the midst of troubles His presence shall go with you, and He will give you rest.

SERMON XIX.

THE RACE SET BEFORE US.

I COR. IX. 24.

“So run, that ye may obtain.”

THIS life is a great race-course, where men are running, striving, struggling for a prize. They are not all running over the same course, and trying for the same reward, but for all life is a struggle—a race. Some have set *earthly greatness* as the prize before them. History tells us of many who thus ran the race, spurred on by ambition, only to find disappointment when the prize was gained. Timour the Tartar aimed at universal conquest, saying the earth was too small for more than one master. It took him fifty years to gain his vast kingdom, and the only happy period of his life was during the two months when he had ceased to rule. The first Napoleon, we are told, was devoted to his wife Josephine, and tenderly loved his mother and brethren. When ambition

took possession of him, all the good in his nature seemed to die. Josephine, the true and faithful wife, was cast aside, his mother was not allowed to sit in her son's presence, his brothers were disgraced. For the sake of ambition he sacrificed honest love, and the prize for which he strove brought him neither peace nor happiness.

Look where you will, and you will see that those who are running the race of ambition only are disappointed. Caligula, the Roman emperor, with the world at his feet, cries, like a spoilt child, for the moon. Philip of Macedon, falling in a wrestling match, and seeing the mark of his body in the sand, exclaims, "See how little a parcel of earth will hold us dead, who ambitiously seek the whole world while living."

Again, many are running the race for *wealth*. Their one object is to be rich. They work as hard as slaves, they deny themselves rest and amusement, that they may amass so much money. When it is gained they are no happier, because, however much they have, they still want more. If you give a little child an apple it clasps it in its tiny hands, and is delighted. If you give it a second apple, it finds great difficulty in holding both; and if you add a third, the child

first drops one, then another, and it is full of distress. It has more than it needs. Truly was it written on a certain monument—"A man's riches consist not in the amount of his wealth, but in the fewness of his wants."

Some men, again, run the race of *selfishness and pleasure*, thinking of nothing, caring for nothing, but themselves.

Now let us think of the race which God would have us run. It is the race of which S. Paul speaks to the Corinthian Church. It is the race set before us; we are to take the course which is mapped out for us—"running the way of God's commandments." When we are baptized we are entered for the Christian race; God says to us, "This is My way, walk ye in it."

In earthly races only the strongest and swiftest runners can obtain the prize. In the Christian race everyone who runs with patience the race set before him, who keeps in the track of duty, in the way of God's law, shall receive the prize.

Our ways through life are very different. Some are in high places, some in low; some lead, others follow; some teach, others listen; some have five talents, some only one. There is one and the same thing, however, for all to do—to run the

race set before us, to live and act and talk as Christian men, to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of God's holy name.

Whether we be princes or peasants, prime ministers or farm labourers, there is one course for us—the race *set before us*; not our own way, not the road of self-pleasing, but God's way, the way of His commandments. He has chosen all of us to be His servants, He has made us His own children by adoption, and He says to us, "Go, work in My vineyard; occupy till I come."

Some of you may think "What time and opportunity have I for running this race, for working for God? I have to labour for my daily bread; I have my family to support." Well, it is just in your daily labour that you *are* running the race and working for God, if you are labouring in *the right way*.

God put you where you are, gave you your work, your family, the means of supporting them, and God expects you to work as Christian men, remembering Whose servants you are, rendering unto the world the things which are the world's, but rendering unto God the things that are God's.

Because a man tills the earth, there is no reason why he should have an earthly mind. Because a

man has dirty work to do, it is not necessary that his thoughts should be dirty. The man who fears God and loves his neighbour, will make the commonest work noble. If a man prays to God with all his heart, and does his work with all his might, no matter what his rank, that man is running the race set before him in the way of God's laws, and in the works of His commandments.

Running the race, then, means doing our duty to God and our neighbour in the place where God has put us, living, talking, working, as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us think of some plain rules for all who wish to run with patience the race set before them, and so to run that they may obtain the prize.

First, then, if we are to run the Christian race we must practise *self-denial*. "Not my will, but Thy Will be done" must be the keynote of our lives. Every competitor in an earthly race has to give up a good deal, and train severely if he would win. In the race of holiness, of duty, we must daily mortify our corrupt affections, and daily proceed in all virtue and godliness of living. No man ever succeeded even in worldly matters without hardship patiently endured, difficulties

conquered, sorrows borne with courage. Look at Columbus discovering the New World in spite of ridicule, opposition, poverty, treacherous friends, cruel enemies. At last the joyful cry was raised, "Land! land!" and the patient runner of the race had reached his earthly goal, and had discovered the New World.

If we, my brethren, are to run the race of godliness, and to reach that better country which is a Heavenly, we must keep under our bodies, and learn to endure hardness.

"Not on flowery beds, nor under shade
Of canopy reposing, Heaven is won."

Luxurious Christians, idle Christians, selfish Christians, are not worthy to bear that holy name, which means a cross, a struggle, a patient bearing of life's burden, a running of the race set before us.

Next, in the Christian race we must *make progress*. There can be no standstill with the Christian. If we are not going forward we are going backward. If we are not more patient, more gentle, more contented, more trustful, more resigned to God's Will than we were a year ago, we are less so, we are going back, instead of running the race set before us. Each one of you, my brothers, is a

better man or a worse than he was twelve months ago.

Again, in running the race, *we must not overload ourselves*. S. Paul bids us cast aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us. If you were going to take part in a foot race you would not put on all your richest and heaviest clothes, and fill your pockets with money. Yet many people thus overload themselves in the Christian race. Some think so much of their clothing that they neglect to wear the ornament of a pure and holy life. Some are so fond of their money that they can give no thought to anything else, and worship a golden image instead of the Lord Who bought them. Such people are overloaded. We must not let the world hang like a dead weight upon us, if we want to reach Heaven.

Then think of some other weights which must be cast aside, if we are to run the race set before us.

Faithlessness and doubt are weights which will hinder us from running the race. If we cannot quite *trust* God, and *believe* in Him, we shall never run the race properly. If we say, "I shall never be able to keep in the right course; I shall never be able to run the race set before me; I am so afraid of what may happen in the future," why

be sure we never shall reach the mark or win the prize. If we go through life always doubting God, fearful of to-morrow, faithless, hopeless, we shall faint and fail.

Then, *worry* is a sore burden, too heavy for us to bear. Troubles of course we must expect, anxieties and frets there are for all, but the man who is constantly increasing a load of worry, going out of his way to meet a trouble, magnifying every anxiety twenty-fold, will soon utterly break down beneath the weight. Let us cast aside that soul-crushing weight of worry; let us feel sure that the Lord will provide, and that when we come to a steep place His Hand will be there to help us over.

Then there are our *besetting sins*, which cling to us, and hinder us from running the race. With the weight of unforgiven sin upon us we can make no progress in the Christian course. We cannot keep our sins and have the prize too; we cannot carry that weight and win the race as well.

Let us ask ourselves the serious question—
“What hinders me from going forward, getting nearer to God, nearer to what He would have me to be? What is my besetting sin? I think I know my neighbour’s fault, but I do not know

myself. Let us examine ourselves honestly, praying for help to God, to Whom all hearts are open, and from Whom no secrets are hid.

Perhaps you think that your sins are only small and trifling. They are not the less dangerous. A false step may give you a broken bone or a sprained ankle, which will effectually stop your journey, and a so-called small sin will cling to you and hinder you in the race set before you.

The Israelites of old gave Aaron *small* trinkets of gold—trifling gifts they seemed, but from them grew the golden calf of their idolatry and their ruin. If we neglect evil habits, besetting sins, because they appear small, they will grow into such a hindrance as will block our way on the race of holiness altogether. When you see the tiny, fragile snowflakes beginning to fall, you scarcely think that they can presently form a drift through which the strongest steam engine cannot pass. Pope Adrian was choked to death by a gnat, and King Herod was eaten of worms; so little sins can and do destroy souls as much as the greater crimes at which the world shudders.

In the days of ancient Rome, when gladiators fought in the amphitheatre, one of the combatants frequently carried a net, and if he could cast this

over his antagonist, the gladiator thus entangled was powerless. Satan watches us who are trying to run the race and fight the battle, the little sins which we call trifles grow into a net in his hands, and at last the fatal folds cling to us close—the sin that doth so easily beset us—and we are powerless.

With one the besetting sin is *indolence*, which tempts us to pamper our body at the expense of our soul, and persuades us to lie in bed when we should be worshipping our God at the Holy Altar. You know what Sunday morning is becoming in our country places—a mere time of slothfulness, and this sin will grow upon us till we give up Church-going altogether, and forget the race which is set before us. With some the besetting sin is *pride*, which makes people impatient of reproof, angry if they are rebuked, and inclined to thank God that they are better than their neighbours. *Selfishness*, in a thousand different forms, is the besetting sin of the majority. A man wrapped up in love of self has no room for thoughts of God, his selfishness clings to him like a loose garment, and he *cannot* run the race set before him. *Moral cowardice* is the besetting sin of many. A man is afraid of what people

will say of him. Many a one would be a regular Church-goer and communicant were he not afraid of the jeers and laughter of ungodly companions. He thinks, "I should like to run the race set before me, but I am afraid of my neighbours."

There are many other hindrances which beset us, of which the time would fail me to speak. These sins must be cast aside if we would so run the race that we may obtain the prize. As a good farmer always digs up a weed when he sees it, so we must ever be armed with prayer, and be constantly watching for and rooting out besetting sins.

Lastly, remember that a true life is one of struggle, of conquest, of reaching forward. A wise man (Bacon) says, "Men must know that in this theatre of human life it remaineth only to God and (the Saints) and Angels to be lookers on." They watch, but we must labour to run our race. Brethren, so run that ye may obtain; keep your eyes and thoughts fixed on Jesus Christ; pray without ceasing, and so run the race set before you, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith.

SERMON XX.

THE OBEDIENT LIFE.

DEUTERONOMY XI. 26-28.

“ Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse ; a blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God ; and a curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God.”

THE keynote of the teaching both of the Old and New Testament is obedience. From first to last we see a blessing promised to those who obey, misery and ruin to those who are disobedient. The command to obedience was given to our first parents ; they had liberty and happiness in Eden, but they were to abstain from one thing. They disobeyed, and as a consequence ruin and sorrow came upon them and all mankind.

God’s people Israel were promised blessings, and conquest, and power, and honour if they were obedient to the Word of the Lord their God. The history of Israel is one long story of God’s forbearance and man’s disobedience, till at last we

see the kingdom of Israel and Judah broken up, the people who were God's, no more a people, the holy city a heap of ruins, the dishonoured Temple destroyed. The Israelites were ordered to obey the laws and commandments of God in remembrance of the great things which He had done for them. He had delivered them out of the prison-house of Egypt, and led them in the wilderness like a flock; He had fed them with bread from Heaven, and given them water out of the stone; He had delivered them from their enemies round about, and promised them a home and rest in the good land beyond Jordan.

In remembrance of their great deliverance, and of the good things which He had done unto them, they were to obey the voice of the Lord. This is the lesson of the Old Testament. It is the same in the Gospel. We were shut up in the prison-house of sin, worse even than the bondage of Egypt. We were so fast in prison that we could not go forth. There was no hope for us; we were even as dead men, as criminals lying in the condemned cell, cast for death. Then Jesus Christ came to deliver us. He brake our bonds asunder, and said to the prisoners, "Behold, I set before you an open door."

Once a man was looking over a bird-fancier's shop, and he saw numbers of larks which were singing blithely. One bird he noticed sat drooping and sad in the corner of his cage, and the dealer said it had never sung, and that he thought it would die. The customer bought the lark, and tried by kindness and care to induce it to sing, but all in vain. At last he carried the cage and bird out into the fields, and, opening the door of the prison, he set the bird free. For a moment the lark looked anxiously at the open door, as if doubting whether it were truly free. Then it spread its wings, and soared on high, and as it mounted upwards it began to sing.

Ah, my brethren, we all were fast in the cage of sin and death, and it was only when Jesus had opened the door and set us free that we could sing a song of deliverance, even a thanksgiving unto our God. Well, Jesus has not only delivered us from the prison of sin and death, but He leads us, His Church, through the wilderness of this world, towards the good land of Paradise, and He feeds us with the true Bread of Heaven, even with His own precious Body and Blood, and He gives us of the water of life freely.

But there is something for us to do also. You

answer me that we must believe in the Lord Jesus ; we must have faith in Him. Quite true ; but how is this faith to be shown ? Talking about it is of no use. How can you tell if your servant has faith in you, respects you, loves you ? By his obedience. If he believes in you, and loves you, he shows it by doing all that you tell him.

As for Israel of old, so for Christians to-day, comes the solemn command to obey. We are to keep God's great goodness in remembrance, and strive to obey the voice of the Lord our God, and walk in His laws which He set before us. "If ye love me," says our Lord, "keep My commandments." There is the test, the proof of our faith and love ; we shall do what Christ tells us to do. Let no man venture to call himself a disciple of Jesus unless he is trying to follow in His steps, to walk where Jesus walked, to live as Jesus lived. The one thing which a Christian has to do is to obey orders.

In an earthly battle success depends upon the soldiers' perfect obedience. It is not for them to discuss an order, or to argue about the wisdom of this or that movement, they have simply to obey. So in the great battle of life, those alone win the victory who obey the commandments of their God.

Jesus says, "Do this." Sometimes we do not quite understand the command, or see the use of it. He bids us bring our little child to Holy Baptism; He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." And some of us may say, "I should like to have my child baptized, but I am not sure about it. Some of my neighbours do not believe in Baptism. Some tell me my child must grow up and be converted before he can be baptized."

My brethren, there must be no "but" between us and God. When Jesus says, "Do this," you must do it, or you are no follower of His.

A preacher of to-day says, "It is not for you or me to be originals; we must be humble copies of Christ. There must be nothing about our religion of our own inventing; it is for us to lay thought, and judgment, and opinion, at the feet of Christ, and do what He bids us, simply because He gives the command."

I have heard of an artilleryman who was asked, after a famous battle, what he had seen. "Nothing but smoke," was his answer. Then he was asked what he had done, and he replied that he had just kept firing his own gun.

Brethren, what we, as Christ's soldiers, have to

do, is to be content to occupy the place which God gives us in the battle of life, and to keep on doing our part in it faithfully, asking no questions, but obeying orders.

Again, Christ says to us, "Do this;" bring your child to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, as soon as he is old enough to understand the solemn vow, promise, and profession made in his Baptism.

Some of you, perhaps, have neglected this command. You have thought that Confirmation was not a matter of great importance, or you have omitted to lead your child towards it, or you have suffered him to be laughed out of the thought of Confirmation by careless or ignorant companions. Or perhaps you excuse yourselves by saying, "Christ did not confirm." No, and for that matter neither did He baptize. But Jesus gave commandment to His disciples to go and baptize all nations, and commanded the Church to lay hands on those who were baptized, and they received the Holy Spirit.

When you brought your child to be baptized you were commanded to see that the infant should be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him. You answer, perhaps, "I should not object to Confirmation, but I cannot see how the gift

of the Holy Ghost can be given in that way."

Again, I say, there must be no "*but*" between us and God. Can you see the wind which rises suddenly and sweeps the roof off your house? Can you see and understand how a good thought comes into your mind? No, God is a God Who hides Himself. "God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

It is enough for us to feel, "It is the command of the Lord Jesus, Who has redeemed me: it is the teaching of the Church to which I belong; I will do this."

Again, Jesus Christ says, "Do this in remembrance of Me." What is it that He would have us to do; something very hard, very distasteful, very terrible? One might believe so when we see how few, comparatively, obey Him in this matter, how small is the percentage in every congregation who really follow their Master by being Communicants.

And yet this command—"Do this—take, eat, this is My Body which is given for you: this is My Blood of the New Testament which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins"—was the dying order of our Master, the last precious legacy of His love.

How can we shrink from the Altar, how can we refuse to look upon our Saviour in His Sacrament, and yet continue to call ourselves Christians? Some of you will offer the old pitiful excuse, "I am not fit to receive the Blessed Sacrament: I should have to live up to it if I became a Communicant."

Brethren, we eat to live, we do not live to eat. So in receiving the sacred food of the Altar, we do not live up to a certain point of holiness in order to partake of it, but we partake of it that we may live, that we may be able to lead godly, righteous, and sober lives. "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you."

Is it with some of you that you have favourite sins which you will not forsake, and so you will not go to God's Altar because you love your sins so well? But how will you do in the end thereof, when the hour of death and the Day of Judgment come upon you, and you stand face to face with your old sins, and your lifelong disobedience; you who called yourselves Christians, yet week after week rejected your Saviour present in His Sacrament—what can the sentence be but "Depart from Me, I never knew you?"

Are any of you trying to make a bargain with God, by keeping some of His commandments, and neglecting others? Are you saying that you read your Bible, and pray, and come to Church, but that you will not become a Communicant? Then remember the same God Who said, "Search the Scriptures," "Ask, and ye shall have," said also, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Are you saying that you attend all the outward ordinances of religion, and give up a good deal of money or comfort for the good of the Church, but yet refuse to be friends with some neighbour or relation with whom you have quarrelled? then remember that He Who told us to give alms of all we possess, told us also to forgive a brother his trespasses unto seventy times seven, and that no one shall find forgiveness from God unless he freely forgives his fellow-man.

Are you willing to be a Christian and a Churchman on Sunday, but on all other days you are too busy to think of God and His commandments? If our way of life is sinful, a foul sepulchre of corruption, think you that whitewashing it once a week will do it any good? No, we must obey God's commandments in *all* we do and say. Our religion must be the guide, the regulator

of our whole existence. When Jesus says, "Do this," we must do it. God grant us all more strength, more ready obedience, more perfect faith, that we may be able to say with truth, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

SERMON XXI.

THE SELF-DENYING LIFE.

S. MATTHEW X. 39.

“He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”

SUFFERING and self-denial run through all God's dealings with man. Men are naturally fond of self and self-pleasing, and so God in His mercy lays burdens upon their shoulders, and sorrows upon their hearts, to teach them to be unselfish. “Every man for himself” is the motto of the selfish worldling; the whole teaching of Christianity is just the opposite. Selfishness is the root of all sin, and so God gives us all a cross to bear, that we may crucify self—the old man—and utterly abolish the whole body of sin. The devil offers his servants their own way. He promises them freedom from all restraint; but he is a liar from the beginning, and is merely rivetting on the chains of perpetual slavery. He shows them “the primrose path” of pleasure and

selfish enjoyment, but he suffers them not to see where the path ends. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not show His followers any flower-strewn road, any picture of ease and pleasure. He tells them plainly that in this world they shall have tribulation, that they shall provoke the world's hatred, that a man who finds his life shall lose it, that unless one bears his cross and denies himself he cannot be Christ's disciple.

As the silver must go into the fire over and over again till all the dross is burnt out of it, so God's people must be tried in the furnace of affliction and self-denial over and over again, till all the base metal is purged away. God's jewels must be cut, and polished, and ground time after time before they can find a place in His treasure-house above. Some of the most valuable of gems are those which have been longest exposed to the severest process of polishing, so some of God's truest saints and noblest heroes are those who are called on to bear the heaviest trials, and the sharpest bereavements. Let no man say when he is troubled, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious," but rather, "God be praised, for whom He loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

As says a noble writer of our day, "the best reward for having wrought well already, is to have more to do; and he that has been faithful over a few things, must find his account in being made ruler over many things. This is the true and heroical rest, which only is worthy of the sons of God. As for those who, either in this world or the world to come, look for idleness, and hope that God shall feed them with pleasant things, I count them cowards and base."

Again, speaking of the text, "Whosoever loseth his life for My sake shall find it," the same writer says that men have taught us "that it is the one great business of every one to save his own soul after he dies, every one for himself; and that that, and not divine self-sacrifice, is the one thing needful, and the better part which Mary chose."

Yes, this selfishness is largely taught from certain pulpits. Men are naturally selfish and self-seeking enough, without these vices being imported into their religion; and yet the religion of too many consists in the selfish attempt to take care of their own soul.

If a soldier in battle were to devote all his thought and energy to protecting himself from

harm, he would win no success ; we should find him carefully sheltered from shot and shell, instead of boldly taking his place in the field with his comrades.

So with God's people in the battle of life ; if we are only thinking about our own soul we shall be afraid to meet the dangers and temptations of life's warfare, we shall shrink like cowards from death, uttering the pitiful excuse that we are not fit to die.

My brothers, let us do our duty to our God and our fellow-man like good soldiers of Jesus Christ ; let us do the work which God has given us to do, and leave our soul to the care of the God Who is all just, and rewards every man according to his work. The healthy man goes on his way, and works his works betimes, and does not for ever peer and examine into his body to see if he be sick. Another is always trying to see what is inside him, and wasting his time on fancied ailments when he ought to be busy at his work. The same is true of spiritual things. The man who is trying by God's help to live a prayerful, useful life, goes on his way rejoicing, and is ready to live or die, as it may please God. Another is always dissecting himself morally to examine his

soul whilst he ought to be working in God's vineyard. We are all too fond of thinking and talking about ourselves, and because this devil of selfishness goes not out, but with prayer, and fasting, and hard discipline, God sends sorrows upon us that we may learn to deny ourselves, and to remember our cross.

"He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." Sometimes it is literally our life that we are called upon to give up for the sake of doing right. Some forty years ago, the ship *Birkenhead*, carrying English troops to Africa, struck on a rock near the Cape of Good Hope. There was only room in the boats for the women and children, and the sailors who were to take them ashore. These were ordered to leave the sinking ship. Then the officer in command of the troops paraded them on the upper deck, and said to them, "Now men, show them how brave men can die." And so, in sight of the boats which were to carry the rest to safety, those soldiers stood at "attention," each man steady and immovable, as the ship sank with them into the sea. "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

Sometimes God takes from us what is dearer than life to us—someone whom we love better

than we love God. Just as the gardener will cut away shoot after shoot from a tree before it will bring forth good fruit, so sometimes God takes our children from us one after another, till those treasures which we had in earthly vessels are all in the Churchyard, and we learn to say at last, "God's Will be done." When all things seem prosperous and happy in this life, we are tempted sometimes to forget that this is not our rest; that here we are strangers and sojourners like our fathers. By-and-bye, one of the family is taken; there is a vacant chair in the room, and another grave in the Churchyard. Another leaves us, and in time we feel that Heaven is, after all, our true home, for there the greatest number of our dear ones are already.

People sometimes wonder that God, Who is good and loving to all men, should allow so much sorrow, and sickness, and trouble upon the earth. It is just because God *is* so loving that He suffers us to be troubled for a little, that we may be safe for ever.

"The sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Some of our sorrows are the direct fruit of our sins. God gives us Heaven, and we make

hell for ourselves. It is God's unchanging law that trouble should succeed sin as a consequence.

Other sorrows are like the chastisement of a wise and loving parent, or a faithful teacher; they are the discipline of the school of life, teaching us to forget ourselves, and to think of others; teaching us to be *men* in the true sense of the word.

My brothers, trust no religion which offers you only ease and self-pleasing. Trust no path in life which is all smooth and easy. "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." Here is one great and all-sufficient reason for self-denial and self-sacrifice. Jesus our Master suffered, and pleased not Himself, and gave Himself a Sacrifice for the sins of many. We cannot claim to be His unless we tread where He trod, unless we go through some Gethsemane of agony, some Calvary of crucifixion. Beware of a religion which costs you nothing; beware of thinking that your duty consists only in attending bright and beautiful Services, and listening to attractive preachers, and enjoying good music. All this may be pure selfishness. If you are not denying yourself, giving up something for Christ's sake, bearing patiently the cross offered you, verily your religion is vain.

When Alexander the Great marched through Persia, his way was blocked by ice and snow. His soldiers, weary and dispirited with the difficulties of the way, would go no farther. Then Alexander, dismounting from his horse, and seizing a pickaxe went through the midst of them, making a path for himself. Whereat his followers were ashamed, and first his friends, then the captains of the army, and lastly the common soldiers, followed him.

We must not refuse to tread the narrow way of duty because it is often rough, and blocked with difficulties. "The Lord—He it is Who doth go before us ;" and we must follow in the same way that He trod, for there is only one way to Heaven, and that the way of the Cross.

SERMON XXII.

HELPS.

ACTS XXVII. 17.

“They used helps.”

S. PAUL was in deadly peril on the sea. He had appealed unto Cæsar, and was on his way by ship to Rome. The vessel, driven by a furious tempest, was becoming every moment less able to ride out the storm, and the strained and battered timbers were beginning to admit the water. Then the crew, with difficulty, tried to give the groaning ship some help, and proceeded to undergird it—that is, to pass a strong cable round the hull. Besides this, they lightened the ship, casting overboard the valuable cargo in order to save their own lives.

That shipwreck of S. Paul is full of spiritual lessons for us. I will only take one—our need of using helps.

We are all like ships upon the sea, and we are

all hoping to reach the fair haven of Paradise, the better country, which is an heavenly. For us, as for the ships, there are many dangers on the wide sea of life, and the waves of this troublesome world often rage and swell horribly. There are rocks of temptation in our way—some open and visible, others hidden from our sight, and therefore most dangerous. There is a continual mutiny going on within us—the struggle between good and evil; our self-will refusing to obey, our obstinate pride turning away from the voice of conscience. Oftentimes we are driven by a furious tempest; it may be the whirlwind of some great sorrow, or the mighty rushing wind of some overpowering passion. All these things weaken us, as the beating of the waves and the fury of the wind weaken a ship. We must do as the sailors did to the Alexandrian vessel which carried S. Paul—we must lighten the ship, and use helps.

Many and many a brave barque has been lost at sea from being overloaded. Many and many a Christian, who started prosperously on his voyage to Heaven, has been lost for the same reason. The young ruler, who came so eagerly to Jesus, would have found peace and salvation if only he could have lightened his ship, and cast away the

riches which were sinking him. Many a man overloads himself with the desire for riches, and is so heavily laden that he can make no way Heavenwards.

A British ship, carrying an immense amount of money, was wrecked. All on board were safely removed from the sinking ship except one sailor, who was discovered on deck filling his pockets with coins. When told that the ship was sinking under him, he answered that he had always lived a poor man, and was determined to die rich. Many and many another, beside that poor sailor, has shipwrecked his life, his honour, his soul, that he might die rich.

Another man's life is stuffed full of worldliness, like an overladen ship, so that when the storm comes, and the waters rise, he cannot rise with them, but must needs sink. This man is so overloaded with his shop and his business that he has no room for anything else. If you talk to him of the duties of religion, he tells you he has no time except for the duties of his trade. If you tell him to count the cost of what he is doing, he tells you that he has enough to do to count the cost of his outgoings and incomings. If you urge him to read his Bible, he assures you that he has no time

to read beyond his ledger and his order book. Such an one, and there are thousands, goes on like an overloaded vessel, and one day goes down into the great sea of eternity, perhaps with the words ringing in his ears, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Another overloads himself with domestic cares. There are thousands of women who become mere wrecks, which sink lower and lower, because they are overloaded with children, cumbered with much serving, troubled about many things. The girl who used to be a regular attendant at Sunday School, a devout communicant, perhaps, marries, and all is changed. She never enters Church except on such occasions as a Baptism or a funeral; the Bible is locked up in an upstairs drawer; she, and her husband, and family go to rest, and rise in the morning, without one word of prayer to God, or thanksgiving for His great mercies vouchsafed to them. So the woman drifts on farther and farther from God, getting deeper and deeper in the water. All that was good and pure is being gradually crushed out of her. Very often the woman has made a foolish marriage, and the influence of the husband drags down the wife.

"Thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
 What is fine within thee growing coarse, to sympathise with
 clay.
 As the husband is, the wife is ; thou art mated with a clown,
 And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee
 down ;
 He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel
 force,
 Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse."

These ill-assorted marriages, often unblessed
 by the Church and unsanctified by pure love, are
 the frequent causes of moral shipwreck. Let a
 woman, who has been brought up religiously, pause
 and ask herself the question—"What sort of
 future am I preparing for myself if I marry a man
 who is utterly indifferent to religion ; who never
 enters a Church ; who never prays ; who has not
 God in all his thoughts ? Or, let a God-fearing
 man ask himself the question—"What sort of life
 here and hereafter can I look forward to if I marry
 a woman who is utterly careless about religion,
 and whose example will only be one of evil to her
 children ? " I tell you, such people are only load-
 ing themselves till they make shipwreck.

Some of us, again, are overloaded with besetting
 sins and bad habits. There are ships which go
 to sea laden with very dangerous cargoes, gun-

powder, matches, fiery oils, and very frequently they are never heard of again, by land or sea. Some men carry like dangerous cargoes. The drunkard, the unclean, the blasphemer, the gambler, are all overloaded with a deadly weight which will sink them sooner or later.

My brethren, if you would not make shipwreck of your souls, *lighten the vessel*. Whatever it is which makes you sink down in the deep waters, instead of rising heavenwards; whatever it is which keeps you back, and hinders you from making spiritual progress, from going on in the course which the Lord Jesus has marked out, cast it away. You must lighten the ship, or you will be a wreck. The captain of a vessel has sometimes to sacrifice merchandize which he values very highly, and to cast it overboard, in order to save the lives of his crew. You may be called on to give up some habit or pleasure which is very dear to you, but remember, it is a matter of life or death, you must pluck it out and cast it from you, or you cannot be saved.

There is a famous picture by a great artist, which he has called "Abandoned." It represents a wreck on a lonely sea. The red, angry sunset flashes upon the broken masts and tangled rigging,

the waves seem to rise greedily at their helpless prey; the ship, once staunch and true, is going to pieces, and she is abandoned to her fate.

My brothers, there are men and women like that ship; once they were true and faithful Churchmen; they did their duty to God and their neighbour; but in an evil hour they fell into temptation, and they overloaded themselves with the cares and pleasures, or sins of this world, and now, "concerning the faith, they have made shipwreck;" they have forsaken God, and so they go to their place prayerless, hopeless—wrecked lives, wrecked souls.

Look at Saul, king of Israel, abandoned by God and men, falling on his sword on the red field of Gilboa. Look at Judas, the traitor, driven by the fiends of remorse and horror to wreck all in self-murder; look at the apostate Emperor Julian rushing to his last battle, cursing the Holy Name which he had once worshipped. Look on these things, and then pause ere you suffer a soul to go to wreck for which Christ died upon the Cross.

But once more; not only must we lighten the ship, and cast away what hinders us in our progress to Heaven, but *we must use helps*. "We are not sufficient of ourselves;" our help cometh from

Heaven ; what we must do is to use the means which God provides. Foremost among those helps are the Sacraments and Services of God's Holy Church.

When your little child is launched—a tiny, frail barque—upon the sea of life, God gives it the Sacrament of Baptism, wherein the little one is taken into His care, and He will guide it through all dangers, and carry it through all temptations, and finally bring it into His everlasting rest, if the child be willing to be guided in the right way. Set a right value on that Holy Sacrament of Baptism ; it gives new life to your child ; without it “ he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God ”—that is, he cannot begin to go in the way of salvation.

Then there is Holy Confirmation, which comes as a help after we have been out a little while on the stormy sea of life, and find how weak we are by ourselves. Use that help, undergirding the ship which has been bruised and shaken by the rough waves of temptation.

There, too, is the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, where our weak lives are strengthened by the Body and Blood of Jesus our Saviour, where our bodies are made clean by His Body, and

our souls washed in His most Precious Blood.

We have all read those sad stories of shipwrecked men drifting on a spar on the wide ocean, and perishing slowly of weakness and want of food. ^ I tell you that those who starve their souls, who refuse the precious help which their Lord offers them at the Altar, are like those shipwrecked men, adrift on the sea of life, and starving to death.

Then there are other helps. The holy Services of the Church are a marvellous help, bringing rest to the weary heart, comfort to the sad, peace to the penitent. I would that more people would look on the Church as their haven of rest and refreshment, and not merely as a place to be visited formally once a week. I would that you could all feel like one who writes:—

“Fadeth, through arch and aisle, the golden glory,
On carven stall and stone the light grows dim;
As now once more we hear the Gospel story,
From sacred page, through canticle and hymn.

As men at noontide, wayworn and distressèd,
Seek for some forest leafage from the heat;
So we, the pilgrims to a City Blessèd,
Seek shelter here, for holy thoughts and sweet.

It was not so, when in the morn's first splendour,
We thought how well the day's long course to run;
But now, with covered face, we come to render
The sinful doing, and the left undone.”

God also gives us a help in the Bible, in every page of which He sends help from His Holy Place; wherein we gaze on living pictures which we must learn to copy, and trace the footsteps of Christ's most holy life, and study to plant our feet where He has trod. There is Prayer—but I need not speak to you of that, seeing that it should be as the breath of your nostrils, without which ye are all dead men. There is speech in season from those whose faces are steadfastly set to go up to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Would that we had more of those good words spoken. Some amongst us, even truly earnest people, seem ashamed to speak of their faith, and many a child grows up into a man or woman without having heard one word of holy teaching, counsel, or warning, spoken by their parents.

Last of all, help others, that is a sure help to personal holiness. Whatever takes us out of self, and leads us to sacrifice something for others' good, is a step upwards away from earth and nearer Heaven, nearer Jesus, "Who went about doing good." Dear brethren, try to help others, and may God help you.

SERMON XXIII.

TOWARDS THE SUNRISE.

NUMBERS XXI. II.

“And they journeyed . . . towards the sunrising.”

THE story of Israel's journeys in the wilderness appears to many people very dull reading. Over and over again the same thing is told ; how the people journeyed to such a spot, and pitched their camp there ; and how they moved their camp thence, and moved to another spot. Sometimes the people found the place pleasant, shaded by trees, and supplied with water, and they rejoiced. At other times there was no water, and then they lamented, and often murmured against the Lord. As a rule they were inclined to find fault. Now and again we are told that someone died, and was buried.

Now brethren, is not all this exactly the story of our own lives ? Our life is a journey through the wilderness of this world ; it is made up of so

many stages from place to place, where we pitch our camp for a while, then break it up, and remove elsewhere. Sometimes the lot falls to us in a pleasant ground ; prosperity smiles upon us—we are among the palm trees and beside the springs of water, and we rejoice.

But a change comes ; we must quit our pleasant camping-place, and remove elsewhere, and we come to a place where there is no water—a barren place, without comfort or joy ; our house is left unto us desolate ; misfortune is heavy upon us. Now and again it happens to us as to the Israelites, that some one of us dies, and is buried. We have to journey on through the wilderness, and leave the aged father or mother, or the brave son, or the little babe, in some lonely grave.

On their journey, Israel, we are told, “was much discouraged because of the way.” That is exactly the condition of so many among ourselves. They are full of complaints ; the journey is too great for them ; the burden laid upon them is heavier than they can bear ; they long for wings to flee away, and be at rest ; “they are discouraged because of the way.” They forget that it is *God’s way*, which He has set before them, and they forget, too, the pleasant places of rest and com-

fort on the way, remembering only the hard and stony parts of the journey.

We, who profess and call ourselves Christians, are often discouraged because of the way. We are bidden to walk in the narrow way which leads to life eternal, and some of us wilfully prefer the broad road of self-pleasing.

We grow weary of the teachings and commands of Holy Church, and long to strike out a fresh path for ourselves; we are discouraged because of the way; so we rebel against God's commands; we wander from the right way; we neglect the Heavenly Bread of the Sacrament; we murmur, like Israel of old, and refuse the Food which God sends us by a miracle.

Israel was punished for its discontent by a plague of fiery serpents; so we, when we murmur against the Lord, and rebel against His hand, are stung by the fiery serpents of discontent, remorse, despair. Most of the unhappy people in the world are being tormented by serpents of their own creation.

When we repent us of our faults, God bids us lift up our eyes unto One Who was lifted up on the Cross, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and all who are wounded by sorrow or

sin are made whole. Then, like Israel, they go on their way rejoicing, and journey towards the sunrising.

Our way, as Christian people, should ever be towards the sunrising, towards light. All through life's journey we should be "looking unto Jesus," turning our faces towards the place where the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. It has always been the belief of the Church that Jesus will appear at the last day from the East. For this reason we turn Eastward at certain parts of Divine Service, and lay our dead to rest with their feet towards the morning. In all we do, then, in our work, in our worship, we should be journeying towards the light, towards Jesus, towards the sunrising. Some people are like those strange creatures the cave-dwellers, who, from always living without light, are blind.

Some are dwelling in the black, foul cave of habitual sin. All is dark with the poisoned atmosphere of vice ; there is no light there, and no eyes to see it, for the dwellers in that cave are blind ; eyes have they, but they see not. It is not the fault of the sun that the place is dark. A soul may be dark, but it is not that Jesus, the Light

of the World, does not shine forth. "He that followeth Christ shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." But those who love sin and the ways of sin shut out the light, as a guilty man in hiding blocks up the window. Such as these love darkness better than light, because their deeds are evil.

Some are dwellers in the dark dreary cave of sorrow. Sorrow must needs enter into all our lives, but it need not make our home dark. The Christian has light in his dwelling even in the midst of trouble. A poor woman, discouraged and tired with many cares, flung herself in a chair, and said, "Everything looks dark, dark." "Then why don't you turn your face to the light, mother?" asked her little child.

Ah, brethren, if sorrow comes upon you, don't bury yourself in it; don't wrap it all about you like a mourning robe; turn your face to the light, go on your journey towards the sunrising. Some people's lives are like an arctic winter, quite sunless; but for those who are ever turning their faces towards Jesus, the East is ever light with glorious sunshine; sunshine is on their path, and in their heart, and on their faces.

Let us as we fight the battle of life, and take

our way—like the Israelites—through the wilderness, ever journey in one direction, towards the sunrising, towards Jesus, the source and fountain of all true light. There are plenty of false lights displayed on all sides of us, but they who show them are but blind leaders of the blind. The Agnostic who says, "Who is the Lord that I should obey Him?" the man of new views, with a new patent medicine to heal our sin, and a new patent Gospel of hopelessness, will offer to guide us with his feeble light.

One of these men was preaching lately in the streets to a knot of poor, wretched, degraded people, and was telling them the advantages of virtue, and the disadvantages of vice, but uttering no word of a Saviour to help and deliver them. Then a woman, one of the most wretched and degraded of those present, interrupted the preacher, and said, "It's of no use, Mister, your rope isn't long enough for the likes of us."

No, the Agnostic, or the mere preacher of morality or political economy, has no rope long enough to reach those who are deep down in the blackness of sin, no light strong enough to show them the way out. They need the true Light of Light, the crucified Jesus, the risen Jesus

and His blessed Gospel, to be a lamp unto their feet, and a light unto their path.

Brothers and sisters, who have sinned and have sorrowed, who have sometimes turned back in fighting the good fight—and who has not?—let us set our faces steadfastly to journey towards the sunrising, towards the light. Let Jesus, and His Word, and His Holy Church, be our daily guide. As we grow older, and our eyes wax dim, men will say that we are travelling down hill towards the sunset, towards the shadows. Not so. As our earthly eyes see less of this world, our spiritual sight will be all the keener. The light from God's own presence will grow stronger and stronger; we shall be journeying upward; not towards the sunset, but the sunrising, towards the light as of a stone most precious; the darkness of death will be no darkness to God's servant, and he will cry, "Let me go, for the day breaketh. I journey towards the sunrising."

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